

From the humbe avocado, the Mexicans created the only companion to the corn chip.

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Spring is the ideal time to take a boat from Yuyuantan to Kunming Lake.

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From the hundreds of applicants, 10 local cats' have been chosen to take part in the performance.

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Zorro to the Rescue

A Sichuan man has made a name for himself as a saviour of women kidnapped and sold as unwilling brides

By Su Wei

Known locally as "Zhongjiang Zorro," Zhu Wenguang, a former private security guard, opened the Zorro Rescue Center in an office of the Zhongjiang Martial Arts School in Zhongjiang, Sichuan on April 24. Although the center has been refused a business licence by the Zhongjiang Industrial and Commercial Administration Bureau, Zhu, who has rescued more than 100 kidnapped women and children throughout China over the past decade, is not discouraged.

"What Zorro did was perform chivalrous acts. What I have done and am doing is not so different," he told *Beijing Today* in a telephone interview Monday. "I want not only people in Sichuan but people in every province in China to know that there is such a center willing to help them to get their loved ones back."

From gatekeeper to saviour

Zhu says it was while working as a gatekeeper at the Zhongjiang Public Security Bureau that he learned first hand of the distress caused by crimes such as kidnapping. Distraught local people lined up to beg the authorities to find their missing wives and daughters. "They came weeping and pleading, often with photographs of their loved ones," he said. "Some days there could be four or five such reports."

In 1990 his aunt's daughter and daughter-in-law were abducted and sold to peasants in Anhui Province. Local authorities tried and failed to free them; eventually the women escaped on their own. "Partly because of that, I wanted to do something to help those kidnap victims," he said.

"At that time there was an office in the bureau that had been set up to deal with abduction-related crimes and to rescue kidnap victims, but there were only three policemen involved," Zhu said. "I applied to the security company I was employed by to be a volunteer on rescue missions three times in one month, but each time I was told it was the responsibility of the public security bureau to conduct such rescues."

Confidant that the experience in martial arts gained during his army service in Yunnan Province from 1981 to 1984 gave him good grounding for such work, he persisted in his efforts. Finally on March 7, 1994 the security company agreed to allow Zhu to track down Deng Xiaoying, 21 and her niece, Deng Yongchun, 15, who had been kidnapped by a criminal

gang and sold to farmers more than 1,000 kilometers away in Inner Mongolia.

"I had no idea what preliminary measures I needed to take," he said. Carrying an introduction letter from Zhongjiang Public Security Bureau, Zhu and four relatives of the victims set off immediately. "Now I usually spend months doing preliminary detective work, tracing phone calls and letters to locate women trapped in the far reaches of China before setting out to rescue them. Locating and bringing home the victims is costly and time-consuming, since relatives most often have no idea where they have been taken," Zhu added.

After a journey of three days and four nights, they arrived at the village Deng Xiaoying had been traced to. "With the assistance of local police, we searched each household under the pretext of checking residence permits," he said. "When I found the victim and told her I was going to take her home, she knelt and cried, saying even when she died she would die at home."

Zhu says when he took Deng Xiaoying to their car, villagers ran to stop them. "I explained to them that I understood they were also victims, as they had paid money for Deng, but I urged them to let us go, because there were no parents in the world who did not miss their children, and begged them to think about the feelings of the victim's parents. I told them that selling women was a crime and both buyers and sellers were criminals," he said. "But some of them simply would not listen to me at all."

He says if the local police had not fired their guns in the air they would have never been able to leave. Twelve hours later he succeeded in rescuing Deng Yongchun from another village, some 100 kilometers away.

"I cannot say that I was not afraid when seeing crowds of villagers rushing at us. But I didn't have time to think about it," he said. "All I could think about was that no matter how difficult it was, I was going to rescue those victims."

He says it is not uncommon to encounter some "active resistance" in his work. He has been beaten with sticks, tire irons, shovels and fists by villagers and even some local officials when rescuing kidnap victims. Once, in Inner Mongolia, he and several local police were thrashed and dumped in a sewage ditch.

His wife, Yu Meiyang told *Beijing Today* Monday that each



Zhu Wenguang (right) and Xie Min, headmaster of Zhongjiang Martial Arts School with the sign board for the Zorro Rescue Center.

time Zhu returns from one of his rescue missions, she tries to make him promise not to go out again. "But whenever some people cry in front of him, and ask him to help, he forgets his promise."

"I cannot ignore people's pleading. If I did not go, I could not live with my conscience," Zhu added.

Tricks of the trade

Zhu has a high success rate in rescuing kidnapped victims, despite encountering frequent obstruction by villagers and local officials in the places his investigations have led him to. "In 1994, the year I started this work, 37 were saved," he said. "The biggest difficulty I have encountered, apart from communication problems due to the different dialects people speak in different provinces, is that I lack the official status of a policeman, so I have to try in my own way to seek cooperation from police in the areas where the victims were sold."

"It seems most do not like what I do. Usually the police in less developed areas are less cooperative," Zhu said.

A good relationship with local police can make his work much easier. "Guanxi (literally 'relationship' or 'connections') means a lot," Zhu added. He always offers police cigarettes, and invites them for meals during and after his rescue missions, especially when they are unmoved by his pleas for assistance or unequipped to help, and if they are not actively in league with the criminals running the abduction trade.

Zhu failed on three separate



Zhu Wenguang in his office at Zhongjiang Martial Art School

Photos by Xiang Yu

Sold into Marriage

In 1991, 1993, 1995 and 2000, the Ministry of Public Security waged highly publicized nationwide campaigns against the trafficking of women.

In March 2002, Bai Jingfu, deputy general director of the Ministry of Public Security, pointed out that factors such as unbalanced economic development, weak social management and crime prevention systems in some areas and the huge profits involved were the main reasons behind the continued trafficking of women in China, which, though significantly reduced, remained a serious problem in some rural areas.

From 2001 to 2003, police rescued 42,215 kidnapped women and children, according to a Xinhua report early last month.

occasions to rescue one woman from Zhongjiang who had been sold to a farmer in Shanxi. "I did treat the local police for a meal, but there seemed to be some informers among them, for each time I established the victim's whereabouts, she was immediately moved to a new location," he said. "I felt so regretful that I had failed to live up to the family's hopes. I could not look any of them in the eye." He says he finally gave up when several years later he found that the woman had born a child and no longer wanted to return home.

Just an ordinary guy

Zhu says that although some people in Zhongjiang claim his opening the center is nothing more than a way to advertise himself and boost his reputation, he has no desire to be famous. "Otherwise I would have become famous in the late 1990s, when major Chinese media all interviewed me," he said.

While an employee of the security guard company, he had a monthly salary up to 150 yuan, and if he succeeded in a rescue, the company would give him a bonus of 200 yuan. "The company set the price tag of 700 yuan for every family who wanted me to locate their miss-

ing wives or daughters."

After he left the security guard company in 1999, Zhongjiang Public Security Bureau no longer provided him with introduction letters for his investigations. "I have to rely on the media reports I've collected to prove who I am," he said. He now charges between 1,000 and 1,200 for any successful rescue, which usually take around seven days to complete. "If I fail I asked for nothing," Zhu said.

Zhu and his wife now run a teashop, which provides them with a monthly income of around 800 yuan. He also earns a monthly salary of up to 800 yuan as a driver for the martial arts school.

"Most of the money I earn goes to cover expenses incurred in the rescue work, such as telephone bills, travel expenses, fees to smooth the way with local police and even some money to the families to which the victims were sold, for they too, are really poor," he added. "I am the only one working at the center. First, I do not want to put another person at risk. Second, I have no money to pay wages."

This year he has only carried out two rescue missions. "I really wish there was no need for me to go out to rescue kidnapped victims," he said.

Uncertain future

Aware that running the center without it being registered at the local industrial and commercial bureau is against the law, Zhu went to the bureau Tuesday afternoon but was told that he cannot register it under the name Zuoluo Jiejiu Zhongxin (Zorro Rescue Center).

A Mr. Luo, the director of the bureau's enterprise registration department, told *Beijing Today* that the name Zorro Rescue Center cannot be registered because it does not clearly reflect the nature of its business. "If

it continues to operate, we are certain to suppress it," he said.

A staff member of the State Industrial and Commercial Administration information office, who declined to disclose his name, told *Beijing Today* that the center should not be registered. "It is a new form of business that no one knows clearly how to deal with yet," he said. "In fact what the administration does is merely the last step during an enterprise's registration procedure, since different levels of government are involved."

Li Xu (a pseudonym) of the Beijing Industrial and Commercial Administration told *Beijing Today* the reason a license had not been granted was due to the nature of the business. "In 1994, companies in the business of collecting debts for creditors were allowed to open and operate under strict supervision, but several years later they were all closed down, because they had developed some characteristics of criminal gangs," he said. "The Zorro Rescue Center is no different from such kind of companies. It is the government's duty, not a private company's to rescue people who have been kidnapped. What can the center do when people refuse to hand over the victims? Can it be entitled with any legal power to punish those who do so?"

Zhu responded, "I know the law and want to be a legal tax payer. I was asked to change the name to Wenguang Civil Affairs Investigation Institute, but I'm very attached to the name 'Zorro Rescue Center.'" He said he will just wait and see what will happen, "I care more about what I can really do like Zorro."

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Free Personal Classifieds

Beijing Today is launching free personal classifieds service. For sale and wanted ads, situations wanted and vacant, language exchange and personals, and rentals will be

printed free of charge. Email your personal classifieds (in English and Chinese) to info@ynet.com. Personal classifieds should conform to relevant laws and regulations.

China Publishes White Paper on Employment

By Hou Mingxin

The Information Office of the State Council published a White Paper on China's employment situation and policies Monday.

"The employment situation in China has remained basically stable," the paper states, attributing this to the Government's hard work over the past years and the adoption of proactive employment policies.

According to the paper, in 2003, the total urban and rural employed population in the country reached 744.3 million, of which the urban employed population was 256.4 million, accounting for 34.4 percent, and the rural employed population was 487.9 million, accounting for 65.6 percent.

From 1990 to 2003, the employed population increased by 96.8 million, an average rise of 7.4 million annu-

ally, according to the paper.

"In recent years, as the employment pressure has been continuously increasing, the government has adopted many measures to curb the sharp rise of urban unemployment," says the paper.

By the end of 2003, the registered unemployment rate in urban areas was 4.3 percent, and the number of registered jobless urban people was eight million.

The paper says that in 2004, the government plans to find employment or reemployment for 9 million people, and reemployment for 5 million laid-off workers, adding that the registered unemployment rate in the urban areas is planned to be controlled at around 4.7 percent.

"As people in the rural areas make up the majority of China's popula-

tion, the government has paid great attention to employment of the rural workforce," says the paper, noting that it has taken the development of township enterprises as an important way to employ the surplus rural workforce.

In 2003, township enterprises provided jobs for 136 million surplus rural laborers, or 27.8 percent of the rural workforce. Meanwhile, more than 98 million rural laborers took up jobs outside their townships, over six times the 1990 figure of 15 million, according to the paper

"The government has always been highly concerned about and placed great importance on the employment of women, youth and disabled people," says the paper.

The female population in employment in China's urban and rural

areas increased from 291 million in 1990 to 337 million in 2003, according to the paper.

By the end of 2003, 4 million disabled people in urban areas throughout China had found employment and the figure in rural areas was 16.8 million. The overall employment rate of the disabled is 83.9 percent, says the paper.

In the coming 20 years, China's population above the age of 16 will grow by 5.5 million annually on average. By the year 2020, the total population of working age will reach 940 million in China, says the paper, adding that severe employment pressure lies ahead.

The government will endeavor to realize relatively full employment, and control the unemployment rate within endurable limits, says the paper.

Private Bookstore Granted Nationwide Licence

By Chu Meng

The General Administration of Press and Publication of China has granted distribution rights and a license to operate a national chain store to Beijing-based King and Key Education Group, an individually-run book wholesaler. The move, announced at a press conference Wednesday at the Great Hall of the People, marks the end of state-owned Xinhua Bookstore's monopoly status in China.

"China's publishing and circulation domains still mainly rely on Xinhua Bookstore. We have no publishing network covering the entire country, and have not formed a healthy competitive environment. Granting the rights to King and Key Education Group is another milestone in the transformation of China's cultural system, after the establishment of the China Publications Corporation on April 4 this year," said Liu Binjie, deputy director of the administration said at the conference.

The granting of the rights and licence allows King and Key Education Group to publish books, magazines, audiovisual and electronic products, as well as run wholesale and retail businesses..

"In the first step this year, we will open more than ten bookstores in major cities. We are confidently facing this new challenge," Tao Huaying, the director from chief administration office of the group, told *Beijing Today*.

King and Key Education Group is one of the biggest privately operated publishing enterprises in China. Founded in 1995, its main area of business is the wholesale and retail of cultural and educational books, with over 800 sales networks throughout China. In 1999, it became the first bookstore in China to be granted ISO9001 quality certification.

Corporate Pension Management Regulation Unveiled

By Hou Mingxin

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security, China Securities Regulatory Commission, China Insurance Regulatory Commission and China Banking Regulatory Commission last Friday jointly issued a provisional regulation on corporate pensions, aiming at limiting risk and keeping pension funds liquid.

The regulation, which will take effect on May 1, sets a baseline for who can manage a corporate retirement fund and how retirement funds should be invested.

According to the regulation, no less than 20 percent of the funds can be put into liquid investments, such as demand deposits, central bank bills and money market funds; no more than 20 percent can be invested in the domestic stock market; no more than half can be invested in fixed income securities, such as term deposits and treasury bond; and at least 20 percent must be maintained in Chinese treasury bonds.

The funds can hold as much as 20 percent of their assets in equities and equity products, such as stock funds. No holding can exceed 5 percent of a single company's equity or represent more than 10 percent of the pension's assets, according to the regulation.

The regulation stipulates that eligible fund custodians include commercial banks and other commercial institutions with at least 5 billion yuan in net assets. Account managers need registered capital of at least 50 million yuan. Investment managers, including securities firms, need at least 1 billion yuan in registered capital and must maintain net assets of at least 1 billion yuan. Fund management companies, including insurers and other profession investment institutions, selling products must have at least 100 million yuan in registered capital and maintain net assets of at least 100 million yuan.

By the end of 2002, corporate pension funds totaled 50 billion yuan at the end of 2002, according to a recent Xinhua report. The report said China's insurance regulatory body has predicted at least 100 billion yuan in asset growth per year, topping one trillion yuan by 2010.

Farmer Cash Income Increases



Photo by Dong Wei

Rural people's average cash income in the first quarter reached 834 yuan, up 9.2 percent year on year, according to figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics Tuesday.

In the first three months, thanks to the sharp decrease in agricultural taxes, farmers paid 4.5 yuan per capita in taxes and fees, down 36.3 percent year on year, the statistics showed.

The government this year has taken various

measures to increase farmers' income and spur rice production. Besides lowering agricultural taxes, it liberalized purchasing prices for grain, and set minimum purchasing prices for some varieties of rice.

The government also allocated 10 billion yuan in subsidies earlier this year from its grain risk fund to the country's grain farmers in 13 major grain-producing provinces and regions.

(Xinhua)

Regulation Issued on Insurance Assets

By Hou Mingxin

China Insurance Regulatory Commission Sunday released a provisional regulation on the supervision of insurance asset management companies. The regulation, which will take effect on June 1, is intended to further enhance insurers' ability to manage their fast increasing assets.

According to the regulation, the establishment of an insurance asset management company should be initiated by an insurance company, or one of its shareholders should be an insurance company.

The insurance company should have a history of more than eight years, with more than three years of clean records. The net assets of the insurance com-

pany should be no less than one billion yuan and the registered capital for the insurance asset management company should be no less than 30 million yuan, the regulation states.

An insurance asset management company is only allowed to dispose of insurance assets, which means no assets from other industries should be involved, even if the assets are from the company's non-insurance shareholders, according to the regulation.

Increasing by an average of one-third annually, the industry's premium income is approaching one trillion yuan. However, due to policy restrictions, insurers are limited to investing in bank deposits, bonds and mutual funds.

Insurance companies have long been hankering for more investment freedom to enhance returns, a key factor in ensuring their ability to pay claims, but the process is expected to be gradual.

To establish a separate asset management company is also in line with common practice in mature Western markets.

By the end of 2002, among the 34 world's largest insurers on the Fortune 500 list, 20 had established asset management companies.

Last year, the country's top property insurer PICC Property and Casualty and top life insurer China Life were given the green light by the commission to establish their own asset management companies.

Australia and China to Fast Track FTA

By Zhao Hongyi

Australia and China are likely to reach a free trade agreement next year, according to Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile.

"Both sides agreed to put the feasibility study on a fast track. I expect to finish the study in the first quarter or half next year," the minister told media at a press briefing soon after his talks with Chinese Minister of Commerce, Bo Xilai on Tuesday in Beijing.

The minister admitted that "different elements" exist, such as the market access for Australian products and services including liquefied petroleum gas, iron ore, education, tour-

ism, telecommunications, and the more sensitive agricultural products, fresh oranges and mangoes.

Australia opened its market to China's longan and lichee during the minister's visit.

President Hu Jintao and Australian Prime Minister John Howard signed a free trade framework last October in Canberra which sets October 2005 as the deadline for the agreement to be reached.

Asked about the "market economy status" China has set as a requirement, the minister emphasized that Australia intends to recognize the status after the completion of the feasibility study, while China expects

the recognition to come before the FTA is reached.

China has raised the issue of status recognition with a number of big trading partners, including the US and EU. Romano Prodi, president of EU Commission told China during his visit to Beijing on April 16 that the EU is studying the possibility and the initial decision will be made before June.

New Zealand was the first country to recognizing China's "market economy status" earlier this month. The status is important under the World Trade Organization in regard to market access, anti-dumping dispute settlement, and agricultural subsidies.

Two SARS Cases Confirmed, One Patient Critical

Two suspected SARS patients in Beijing were confirmed as SARS patients and one is in critical condition, China's Health Ministry said Thursday.

The two patients, surnamed Li and Teng, are the aunt and mother of Beijing's first newly diagnosed SARS patient, the ministry said in its daily surveillance report on SARS.

At present, Li is in critical condition but Teng's condition remains relatively stable, the ministry said.

According to the ministry, the two patients' blood samples were tested IgG and IgM positive on Wednesday afternoon. Based on their clinical symptoms, epidemiological history and the laboratory test results, experts diagnosed them as SARS patients.

The ministry said Beijing's first SARS patient Li is currently in a stable condition and has had a normal body temperature for 13 straight days.

The other four suspected SARS patients in Beijing are still isolated and receiving medical treatment at Ditan hospital. Among all the people in close contact with the reported patients, 22 have been removed from medical observation.

The ministry said the 26-year-old Anhui diagnosed patient Song is recovering and has had a normal body temperature for six consecutive days. Among the people in close contact with her, 39 have been freed from medical observation.

So far, the health ministry reported four diagnosed and five suspected SARS case on the Chinese mainland, including one suspected patient who died on April 19 in Anhui.

(Xinhua)

Public Security Review

Beijing's 110 emergency hotline received 26 percent fewer calls this week than during the preceding week, and 175 criminal suspects have been apprehended after investigation. Reports of robbery saw a decrease of 29 percent.

Break-ins mostly occurred around Dazhongsi and Malianwa in Haidian, Shuangjing and Hujialou in Chaoyang, Dashilan in Xuanwu, and Dewai in Xicheng late at night. Sanlitun and Jiuxianqiao in Chaoyang, Enjizhuang in Haidian and Guangnei in Xuanwu were the most common places for auto thefts to take place, mainly at night and in the early morning, while street robberies occurred most frequently around the outskirts of Chaoyang, Fengtai and Haidian districts.

Swindles targeting college students and their parents have become a key target of police recently. There have been a number of incidents in which parents are told that their child has been injured in a traffic accident or suddenly afflicted with a serious disease and needs money for treatment. The parents are then asked to remit money to a bank account. The police urged college students and parents to keep alert when receiving calls from strangers.

(Information from Beijing Public Security Bureau)

Agri-Production Commodities Prices Curbed

By Zhao Hongyi

The Municipal Development and Planning Committee set price fluctuation ranges last Friday for agriculture-production related commodities.

The notice requires that all transactions be based on the prices set by the committee. The fluctuation ranges for the wholesaling and retailing are: diammonium phosphate at 2 percent, urea at 7 percent and 3 percent, pesticides at 5 and 8 percent, agri-plastics at 5 and 6 percent.

"Agriculture is the fundamental industry of the country with a population over 1.3 billion," said Shen Jingyun, chief of the price monitoring sector under the committee.

Chinese farmers are the most marginalized group in the rapidly developing country. Grain prices have been increasing steadily since last autumn, which is stimulating the prices of agriculture-production commodities.

"We welcome the grain price increase and are trying to prevent any side-effects which could lessen the benefits brought to the farmers," Shen told *Beijing Today*.

Four Countries Unite to Combat Sandstorms

By Chu Meng

China, Japan, South Korea and Mongolia are jointly to reign in the increasingly serious problem of sandstorms in northeastern Asia, Sunday's *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

Dust and sand storms originate in the dry regions of northern China and Mongolia and blow across 18 provinces and autonomous regions, as well as the Korean Peninsula and Japan, causing big losses in transportation and industry in the affected areas.

Currently, Chinese and Mongolian experts are carrying out experiments fieldwork aimed at finding ways to reduce the intensity and frequency of sandstorms in the area, which have worsened over the past 10 years. They will hand in a preliminary draft by the end of 2004, which will be used to seek support from international organizations.

China, South Korea and Japan established an early warning and monitoring system for dust and sand storms in early time this year. The UN Environmental Program is also providing assistance as part of a US \$1 million project funded by the Global Environment Facility and the Asian Development Bank.

TCL, Alcatel Unveil Handset Venture

By Sun Yongjian

The domestic cell phone market is bracing for the emergence of a powerful new player since Chinese electronics giant TCL Group Shareholding Co. and French telecommunications firm Alcatel signed a memorandum on Wednesday to establish a joint venture for the

production and sales of mobile phones.

The new venture will start with 100 million euros in registered capital, with 55 percent provided by TCL and the rest by Alcatel.

The French side will throw in invisible assets such as customer relation nets, intellectual property rights, experienced re-

search and marketing personnel as well as some fixed assets. Phones produced by the company, expected to begin operation in the third quarter of this year, will bear the Alcatel brand.

Wan Mingjian, senior vice president of TCL Group said, "This exciting cooperation will help us in realizing our

target of becoming a globally advanced manufacturer of mobile terminals," according to a report on Sina.com.

Alcatel President Philippe Germond made similar comments, noting that the cooperation should create a platform for the rapid development of international business for both sides.

"I Hope We Can Share Expertise with China"

By Ma Ning / A Yi

China received a rare royal guest recently when Britain's Prince Andrew toured Shanghai and Beijing from April 21 to 25. The prince, also the Duke of York, came to this country as a special representative of UK Trade and Investment, a government body that supports UK companies' activities abroad and encourages foreign investment.

While in Shanghai, Prince Andrew visited the city's Formula One race track now under construction and then headed to Beijing to discuss the UK's "China Task Force" initiative with Chinese officials in hopes of further promoting bilateral relations.

Beijing Mayor Wang Qishan met with the prince and the two talked about ways for UK companies to get involved in the massive construction projects for the 2008 Olympic Games.

Beijing Today and *Beijing Youth Daily* conducted a joint interview with the prince on April 23 in Beijing.

Beijing Today: Please describe the nature of your role as special representative of UK Trade and Investment.

Prince Andrew: I am a member of the royal family and a part of UK society. It's the royal family's responsibility and duty to promote the image of the UK overseas.

BT: Have you brought any specific contracts?

Prince: It's not my job to sign contracts, my duty is to promote bilateral relations and help UK companies explore business opportunities.

BT: Why did you choose to visit Shanghai's Formula One track?

Prince: The UK is the world leader in the high-tech motor sports engineering industry. Seven out of the 10 Formula One teams are based in the UK. The tiny sector has a \$2 billion annual business volume and employs over 40,000 people in my country. Nearly 300 million people around the world watch Formula One races.

BT: Can you elaborate on what you talked about with the mayor of Beijing?

Prince: I hope we can obtain the opportunity to participate in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. The UK has a lot of knowledge and expertise in handling sporting events. We can share that with China.

BT: Please introduce the "China Task Force" initiative for our readers.

Prince: The "China Task Force" was established last year. The initiative is aimed at promoting bilateral relations by stimulating new ideas and initiatives in science and technology, education, culture and environment and cooperate. We hope when Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visits the UK and discusses it with Tony Blair, we can further promote the initiative between our two countries.



Prince Andrew in discussion with students from Tsinghua University
Photo by Jackey



World's champion Chinese gymnast Li Xiaopeng has been hired as KFC's new image representative. On Wednesday, Li appeared at a Beijing restaurant to promote reasonable dietary habit and healthy life style.
Xinhua Photo

Boss of Meat Maker Arrested for Graft

By Sun Yongjian

Major domestic meat producer ST Chundu announced last Saturday that its Chairman of the Board Liu Haifeng had been arrested on charges of embezzlement on April 23.

Luoyang, Henan Province-based ST Chundu's stock has posted maximum 10 percent drops every day since April 20, during which time the company's market value has shrunk by 200 million yuan.

"Liu was arrested for misappropriation of public funds," the head of the Luoyang securities administrative committee told *Beijing Today* under condition of anonymity.

He added that subsequent to Liu's arrest, ST Chundu had announced its production and operations were running as normal, its board of directors and supervisors were not fazed and worker morale was stable.

"The Luoyang government is paying close attention to the situation and will provide unwavering support to the enterprise in handling this problem," he said.

Centergate Facing Life or Death Test

By Sun Yongjian

Listed private enterprise Beijing Centergate Technologies (Holding) Co., a major domestic player in high-tech industries such as computer manufacturing, software and pharmaceuticals a few years ago, was downgraded to a ST, or special treatment, rating by the Shanghai Securities Exchange on Monday after running high debts for two straight years.

In its 2003 annual report, issued at a press conference in Beijing the same day, Centergate posted net deficits of 633 million yuan for last year. "The company is struggling under great and unprecedented difficulties," newly appointed Chairman of the Board Zhang Guilin said.

Zhang added that 2004 would be a crucial year for the company, and this year's performance would determine whether Centergate could stay in the domestic stock market.

The company has transferred equities to four companies including Beijing City Railway Shareholding Co. for 400 million yuan in badly needed capital, he revealed.

Duan Yongji, Centergate president, expressed confidence in his company's prospects. "It should not be a problem for our company to enter the black by the end of the year," he said.

Plastic Maker Treads into China Market

By Sun Yongjian

South Korea-based Dongsung Chemical Co., the world's largest maker of TPU, a high-tech form of polyurethane used in making shoes, and the designated supplier of Nike and Adidas, announced on April 23 it was opening its first Chinese subsidiary in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province.

Guangzhou-Dongsung Chemical Co. will be established with an investment of \$10 million and specialize in production of materials for shoes. When operations begin, the company should have an annual production capacity of 18,000 tons of TPU, with a potential yearly

sales volume of \$12 million.

In its press release, Dongsung explained the timing of its move as deliberately coinciding with the approach of the 2008 Olympic Games. The company speculated that the Olympics could lead to the tripling of its business in the next four years and predicted Guangdong to become the largest market for sports products in the Chinese mainland.

Dongsung's chemical products occupy 40 percent of the world's TPU market and are also used in car seats and golf equipment. This latest development raises the company's total investment in China to \$30 million.

Two Shopping Centers May Form Commercial Giant

By Sun Yongjian

Following the merger of three local firms this month into a tourist monolith, two heavyweight Beijing shopping centers are considering joining forces to create a retail giant, *Beijing Today* learned through an anonymous tip last Friday.

The Wangfujing DongAn Commercial Group and the Xidan Friendship Commercial Group are ironing out a plan to merge and form a huge retail group with a potential annual sales volume of 8 billion yuan, the unnamed

insider said.

Established in 1955, Wangfujing DongAn is the largest retailer in Beijing and earns 5.5 billion yuan in annual sales. The company listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange in 1997.

Xidan Friendship group was established that same year and has quickly grown to post an annual retail sales volume of 2.5 billion yuan.

According to the source, secret negotiations are currently underway.

Financial Street, HKUST Training Money Institutions

By Zhao Hongyi

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), at the invitation of Beijing's Financial Street, will provide training programs to staff of financial institutions located in the area.

Courses will cover financial risk management, new financial tools and products and internal management, according to HKUST's President, Professor Paul Ching-wu Chu. He made the tatement at a deal-signing cere-

mony held Wednesday in Beijing.

Established in 1994, the Financial Street is aimed at becoming the supervision and administration center of China's financial industry. The street is already home to the headquarters of most of the country's heavyweight financial institutions, including the People's Bank of China, Bank of China, China Construction Bank, and the three government supervising agencies for the securities, banking and insurance markets.

Policy Bank Enters Insurance Market

By Sun Yongjian

The Agricultural Development Bank of China, one of the country's three state-owned policy banks, was authorized to enter the booming insurance industry by the China Insurance Regulatory Commission on April 27. The bank, which normally focuses on providing loans to state-supported agriculture projects, will cooperate with China Pacific Insurance Co. in establishing an insurance agency.

The two sides' agreement calls for them to cooperate in all aspects of setting up and running the agency, from product research and development to risk management and financial control. China Pacific will provide support for insurance products covering the purchase and storage of such agricultural products as rice, cotton and cooking oil.

Taking the Risk Out of Ransom

By Sun Yongjian

China's expanding insurance industry has put out a new kind of product, policies intended to cover ransom payments for kidnapped clients.

The China Insurance Regulatory Commission recently approved sales of such policies to employees dispatched overseas from Chinese enterprises with investment abroad. The first company to get into the ransom coverage business is the Guangzhou branch of US-based AIU Insurance Co., which is offering policies to enterprises in Guangzhou and Foshan covering 130 countries and regions.

According to a report in *Southern Daily* on April 22, an unnamed AIU representative said ransom insurance was necessary in today's turbulent world. He pointed out such coverage could have come in handy for the seven Chinese construction workers kidnapped in Iraq earlier this month.

Microsoft Debuts CDMA Mobiles with Windows

By Sun Yongjian

Software giant Microsoft made its latest stride into the telecommunications industry last Friday when it presented the first generation of CDMA mobile phones installed with the company's Windows Mobile software at a press conference in Beijing.

The US-based corporation cooperated with China Unicom in developing the new phones. Microsoft is providing operating systems to the Chinese telecom giant, a subsidiary of which is in charge of actual phone production.

Shenzhen Tech Fair Seeks Local Participants

By Zhao Hongyi

After five consecutive years of focusing on new and cutting-edge technologies, products and related capital, this year's China Hi-Tech Fair will provide a platform for hi-tech professionals to secure prime positions, according to Li Hongzhong, director general of the annual event and mayor of its host city of Shenzhen.

Li made the comments at a press meeting in Beijing last Friday. The organizing committee of the fair, scheduled for October 12 to 17, is in the process of inviting investors, government representatives, foreign diplomats and employees of multinational companies from Beijing, as well as local businessmen and individuals.

Music Website Cited for Copyright Violation

By Sun Yongjian

A domestic website that provided unauthorized MP3 downloads of popular songs was sentenced to pay compensation to two Hong Kong-based companies for copyright infringement by the Beijing No. 1 Intermediate People's Court on April 25.

The website, www.chinamp3.com, and its parent company, Beijing-based Shiji Yuebo Scientific Co., were ordered to pay a total of 160,000 yuan to Hong Kong Go East Entertainment Co. and Sony Music Entertainment (Hong Kong). The website provided downloads for 35 songs by singer Kelly Chen, the copyrights for which are owned by Go East, and 11 songs by Lo Hau Yam, distributed by Sony Music.

In its verdict, the court stated, "The two Hong Kong companies never authorized any person to use the songs online."

The website has announced it will appeal the judgment. Before the court made its call, there were no specific readings on the provision of unauthorized downloading links in China's law books.

EU Eyes Libya Partnership



Qaddafi and Prodi join hands. AFP Photo

Brussels, April 27 (AFP) - The European Union wants to allow Libya to join its so-called Barcelona Process of closer links with Mediterranean-rim states as soon as possible, European Commission chief Romano Prodi said.

"We are committed to make Libya a full member of the Barcelona process as soon as possible," he told a joint press conference with the Libyan leader, on his first trip to Europe in 15 years.

The Barcelona Process was launched in 1995 to cement closer ties between Europe and the other Mediterranean countries, but Libya has not been able to join because of its international isolation, which has begun to lift recently.

Muammar Qaddafi, the maverick Libyan leader, paid a trip to Brussels recently, the latest move in easing his state's international isolation following Tripoli's agreement to a compensation deal over the 1988 bombing of an airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland and its pledge to give up the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Prodi said he was confident that a number of outstanding issues between the EU and Tripoli would be resolved in the next few weeks.

Qaddafi's talks with EU officials are expected to cover Libyan calls for a lifting of an EU arms embargo. Germany is reportedly holding out against lifting the embargo until Tripoli compensates victims of an anti-US attack on a Berlin discotheque in 1986 which left three people dead and 260 injured.

Last week the United States eased many economic sanctions on Libya and promised to deepen diplomatic ties to reward Tripoli for its decision to abandon programmes to develop biological, chemical and nuclear arms.

Analyst's Take:

The US relaxed its more than 20-year-long economic sanctions against Libya on April 23, which includes recovering normal business activities, financial transactions with and investment in the

country, not imposing penalties on foreign companies who have an investment of over \$40 million in Libya, and allowing US companies to invest in oil exploration and purchase of oil products from the country.

But the US has not deleted Libya from the name list of countries supporting terrorism, which means it continues its weapons embargo against the country. And Libya's assets in the US remain frozen.

The purposes of lifting the sanctions are complex.

First, it is a reward for Libya dismantling its weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The US believes Libya could be a good example for other countries with WMD.

Secondly, it reopens the door for US economic relations with Libya because Libya has huge oil reserves.

Thirdly, the US wants to narrow its disagreements with the EU on sanctions because the EU holds a more active attitude towards Libya and accuses the US of interfering in its internal affairs to prevent European companies doing business with the country.

But unless Libya follows the west completely and unconditionally, the US will not lift all the sanctions completely.

— Li Xuejun, reporter, Xinhua News Agency, Washington

Merrill Lynch Loses Sex-bias Ruling

New York, April 22 (AP) - An arbitration panel has found that Merrill Lynch engaged in systematic discrimination against women in a decision that awarded \$2.2 million to a female former broker.

The decision marks the first ruling against a Wall Street firm for systematic discrimination. Experts said the legal finding of a pattern at Merrill likely will pressure the firm to settle 39 other cases against it that stem from a class-action suit filed against the company in 1997.

"Now there will be a presumption that the other women were victims of a pattern of discrimination. Merrill Lynch will have to rebut that," said Jill Weinstein, a lawyer at Stowell & Friedman in Chicago, which represented former Merrill Lynch broker Hydie Sumner.

A three-member arbitration panel awarded Sumner the money Monday and the decision was made public late Tuesday. It was the largest award to stem from nearly 1,000 bias lawsuits women brokers have filed against the firm since 1997. A separate panel awarded \$500,000 to another female former Merrill Lynch broker in a discrimination case last year.

"If I were Merrill Lynch I would settle the other cases. This is a terrible embarrassment for them," said Alfred Blumrose, a retired law professor who consults in discrimination cases.

Sumner alleged that she was not given the same amount of brokerage work as male colleagues and that her manager at the San Antonio office sexually harassed her.

"It took a lot of personal sacrifice to go through the process. It wasn't easy and it wasn't fun," said Sumner. "But I put it on the public record."

Analyst's Take:

The story reminds us of Wal-Mart being accused by its employees of over exploration, including long hours of work and low pay. Or IKEA being accused of purchasing commodities at low prices in developing countries.

Though the developed countries have full sets of laws and regulations to protect labor from abuse, the problem has never been solved completely. The real fact is that the abuse has moved from the surface to under the table. Female employees and ethnic minorities are the major groups under pressure. For instance, Chinese workers are treated badly in the UK, the US, Japan and South Korea, receiving low pay and working in bad conditions.

Inside China, the problem is serious too. Migrant workers from rural areas work in bad conditions and receive little payment.

The final settlement of labor abuse depends on social development, both in wealth and human quality. Legal tools and social monitoring are also important. It is a long battle demanding lasting efforts and attention, as long as inequality exists.

— Chang Kai, professor of labor relations, School of Labor Relations & Human Resources, Renmin University of China



A sugar cane farmer manages a fire in preparation for the harvest of the crop near Cairns in Queensland. The Australian Federal government, 27 April 2004, is to compensate sugar farmers with a lump sum of \$257 million after they were left out of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States announced earlier this year. (AFP Photo)

Bolivia, Chile Tensions Getting Worse

Santiago, April 24 (AFP) - Chile and Bolivia, unable to put a century-old war behind them, are on no better terms than when Chile's President Ricardo Lagos took office, he said, after Bolivia went to great lengths to deny Chile any of its natural gas.

"We had advanced greatly with previous governments, but the situation is now more complicated, more difficult," Lagos told Radio W in Santiago.

"Things have gone backwards, which I regret and I consider a great failure of my administration," he added.

Vestiges of Chile's 1879-1883

war with Bolivia resurfaced when Bolivia sold Argentina natural gas, on condition that Argentina not resell it to any third party, meaning Chile.

Bolivia lost its access to the Pacific in the war.

The South American neighbors have not had diplomatic relations for 26 years.

In October, Bolivians rioted and toppled their president, in part for planning to route a natural gas pipeline to a Chilean seaport.

President Carlos Mesa came to power after the nationalist demonstrations that left some 80 people dead.

By preventing Argentina from exporting to third countries, Bolivia was exercising its "sovereign prerogative, as can any country, in deciding to whom and under what conditions it would sell," Mesa said Friday.

Analyst's Take:

Bolivia has huge natural gas resources estimated at 54.3 trillion cubic inches. But the country has long been quite poor despite the rich resources. The reason is the disparity between the ruling parties and the opposition parties concerning whether or not to export and to whom to export the natural gas.

Last October, the administration had the intention to sell the gas to the US through a port in Chile. Therefore, Bolivia had to sell part of the gas to Chile. But the opposition parties opposed the idea and called down massive turmoil, which led to more than 80 deaths and the exile of former president Gonzalo Sanches to the US.

Latest reports say the Bolivian cabinet has resigned amidst the chaos.

— Liu Guoqiang, reporter, Xinhua News Agency, Lima

Russian Official Denies Retaliation

Moscow, April 23 (RosBusiness-Consulting) - Measures the Russian State Customs Committee is taking towards China have nothing to do with negotiations on Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization, Deputy Economy Minister Maxim Medvedkov told journalists today.

The deputy economy minister was commenting on information in some mass media sources that duties on Chinese consumer goods would be increased by seven times due to China's inflexible position at negotiations on Russia's accession to the WTO.

Bilateral negotiations with China "are normal" and "Russia does not have reasons for accusing this coun-

try of a hard line," Medvedkov stressed. Technical measures taken by the State Customs Committee "are not connected with politics anyhow," he pointed out.

Previously, the Russian State Customs Committee declared an intention to strengthen the control over products manufactured in China.

Analyst's Take:

The raise increased the average price of Chinese imported commodities by 50 percent. The Russian State Customs Committee admitted the tariff rise will bring in \$500 million tax income for the government. A large number of Chinese businessmen are leaving their commodities in the custom's storage houses. But they have to pay \$100 each day for each package, which is

a heavy burden.

Russia has its reasons. First, Russia believes China has not provided enough support in Russia's application to the World Trade Organization; secondly, Russia believes nearly half of imported daily use commodities from China are smuggled into Russia, which has caused great losses to the country's customs taxation income.

— Song Shiyi, senior reporter, Xinhua News Agency, Moscow

BP To Sell Petrochemicals

London, April 28 (AFP) - British energy giant BP has announced plans to sell over half its petrochemicals business as the group reported a 17-percent rise in first-quarter profits, helped by high oil prices and the sale of stakes in Chinese energy firms.

BP said that it may sell the business via an initial public offering in the second half of 2005.

The group said net profit rose to \$4.72 billion (3.97 billion euros) in the first three months of the year. The result was inflated by an exceptional credit of \$1.18 billion from the sale of BP's stakes in Chinese oil groups PetroChina and Sinopec.

Comcast Withdraws Bid for Disney

New York, April 28 (Reuters) - Comcast Corp., the largest US cable company, said on Wednesday it would withdraw its \$48.4 billion bid to buy Walt Disney Co.

"It has become clear that there is no interest on the part of Disney's management and board in putting Comcast and Disney together," Comcast Chief Executive Brian Roberts said in a statement.

The withdrawal comes a day after Disney's board reiterated support for embattled CEO Michael Eisner, who has faced sharp criticism from high profile shareholders.

DaimlerChrysler to Decide CEO's Fate

Frankfurt, April 29 (Reuters) - DaimlerChrysler Chief Executive Juergen Schrempp may be forced to resign if he fails to win back the support of management board members who rebelled last week against his Asian strategy.

The group's management and supervisory boards refused to throw good money after bad into a bailout of Japanese partner Mitsubishi Motors, sources close to the situation said.

Schrempp's dream of building a global autos group, already marred by hefty losses at Chrysler, was dealt another blow on Monday when Hyundai Motor Co said it planned to scale back its partnership with the Stuttgart-based company and 10 percent shareholder. DaimlerChrysler also owns 37 percent of Mitsubishi.

(Mark Thompson)

GE Chief Defends Overseas Outsourcing

Louisville, Kentucky, April 28 (AP) - General Electric chief executive Jeffrey Immelt defended his company's outsourcing of some jobs overseas Wednesday, saying such moves were part of doing business in a global economy.

Immelt sought to placate angry retirees, who have accused the conglomerate of short-changing their pensions, telling the more than 750 shareholders in attendance that he believes GE has a responsibility to repay the years of service by retirees.

GE is one of several companies, including IBM and General Motors, that have come under scrutiny recently for outsourcing or outsourcing plans.

(Stephen Singer)

Nortel Fires CEO in Accounting Probe

Toronto, April 28 (Reuters) - Nortel Networks Corp. fired its top three executives on Wednesday and said accounting problems already under investigation by regulators ran deeper than expected.

The company said chief executive Frank Dunn would be replaced by William Owens. Also fired were chief financial officer Douglas Beatty and controller Michael Gollogly, both placed on paid leave of absence in March.

The Brampton, Ontario, company said it expected the restatement to halve 2003 earnings, but reduce losses from previous years. It had reported an unaudited 2003 profit of \$732 million in January.

(Jeffrey Hodgson)

US Airways Posts a Loss of \$177 Million

Chicago, April 28 (Reuters) - US Airways Group Inc., the Virginia-based No. 7 US airline on Tuesday reported a quarterly loss of \$177 million.

Its new chief executive Bruce Lakefield said in a statement that the results underscore the need for further changes in its business.

"We have more work to do to ensure long-term success," Lakefield said. US Airways is still under bankruptcy protection.

Holiday Prime Time for Lingo Learning

By Xiao Yingying

During the Labor Day holiday, a series of foreign language learning activities will be held in the city to allow residents to try taking on new tongues.

The Workers' Cultural Palace (Ladong Renmin Wenhua Gong) next to the Forbidden City will be the venue for many of the classes, run from May 1

to 3, while smaller-scale activities will be scattered around the city throughout the week.

The events, sponsored by Beijing Organizing Committee of Citizens' Foreign Language Speaking Activities, will include lectures, exhibitions, language corners and art performances.

Renowned Chinese teachers of Eng-

lish, such as professors Chen Lin of the Beijing Foreign Studies University and Zhang Daozhen, as well as founders of more commercial learning methods such as Qu Gang and Li Ruyun, will be on hand for discussions and lectures.

Beijingers interested in picking up Italian can check out a lecture on learning the

language delivered by professor Zhang Mi of the University of International Business and Economics on May 1.

Exhibitions will be key components in the plan. One show will outline the progress of local people in learning foreign languages, while another will shine light on the newest teaching methods and learning materials and facilities.



Vjacheslaf Samofalof (second from left) meets with former classmates of Zeng Fanson in Beijing.
Photo by Lou Qiyong

Of Love and Loss...

By Zhou Ying

A tale of cross-cultural love lost took a sad turn last week. During a recent trip to China, Vjacheslaf Samofalof of Russia helped a friend, identified only as Ms. Lera, in trying to track down a Chinese man with whom Lera had once kept up passionate correspondence. The two lost contact more than 40 years ago.

Last Friday, Samafalof discovered the man was long dead.

His visit happened to coincide with the 55th anniversary of the establishment of formal relations between China and Russia, or the former Soviet Union.

Lera, 64, fell in love with Zeng Fanson, a Chinese teacher from Yunnan Province, through many letters two two exchanged over six years in the 1950s. At that time, the Chinese government supported its people to make friends with their Russian allies. The two never met, but did exchange photographs.

In his last letter, sent in 1962, Zeng even said he wanted to go to Russia to marry his amorous pen pal.

After their correspondence ended, both ended up marrying other people, but Lera never forgot her former Chinese love. She was hesitant to come looking for him herself because she does not speak or understand Chinese.

So when she learned that her friend Samofalof was coming to China for work on April 16, she entrusted him with the task of finding Zeng, at least to see if the teacher would still remember her.

On Wednesday, Samofalof met a few of Zeng's college classmates in Beijing, including Sun Shixun, Yin Songling, and Liu Dengrui. They told him that Zeng had died in Yunnan Province during the Cultural Revolution.

Because of strained relations between the two countries, Zeng had no choice but to sever his connection to Lera in 1962. Yet the classmates all assured Samofalof that if their friend were alive today, there would be no way he could have forgot Lera.

"They loved each other deeply. The reason for their tragic end was the difficult situation of that time," said Yin Songling.

Samofalof said he would not give Lena the news until he was back in Russia for fear that it would come as a heavy blow. "I will tell her that although Zeng has passed away, his friends have not forgotten her and she still has a lot of friends in China," he said.

Amusement Park

Schedules Holiday Show

By Xiao Yingying

During next week's seven-day Labor Day holiday, Beijing Amusement Park will host a show of beautiful dresses and dances to its normal line-up of fun. Nine elaborate floats decorated in different styles will cruise through the park bearing over 300 Chinese performers in beautiful costumes doing foreign dances such as Irish step dance, France's can-can and the Hawaiian hula.

Other activities such as rock shows and a "dinosaur adventure" for kids will also be held during the week.

Peking University

Launches Summer School

By Chu Meng

Prestigious Peking University will launch its first summer school this year, offering undergraduate-level lessons taught by foreign professors as well as professors and graduate students from the university. The new program was made public by Guan Haiting, chief director of the university's educational administration department, on Sunday.

Guan said the summer school would run from June 21 to July 23 and offer three sorts of classes, core university courses, ones taught by foreign instructors and practical courses. More than 70 classes will be offered, worth two university credits each upon completion.

Around 40 percent of the instructors in the summer sessions will be foreign professors and the rest university staff. Over 6,000 slots will be available, including 1,800 paid openings for students from outside Peking University. The university's students can enroll for free.

Aussie Olympic Artist

Readying New Work

By Xiao Yingying

Australian painter Charles Billich, who specializes in artistic depictions of the Olympics, is preparing to start work on a new piece for the 2008 Games in Beijing, temporarily entitled *Applause for China's Century-long Olympic Dream*.

Billich, 71, was the guest of honor at a press conference held Monday at the headquarters of the Xinhua News Agency. He initially achieved fame in China for the painting *Beijing Cityscape*, the first of his 2008 Olympics-inspired works.

At the press conference, he explained that this time he wanted to expand his focus to cover nationwide celebrations of China's successful bid to host the 2008 Games using a beautiful scroll-like depiction of scenery from around the country. Both of his China-inspired works were commissioned by the government of Canberra, Beijing's sister city in Australia.

During his speech, Billich noted, "The second painting will be more ambitious and a natural sequel to the first painting. I've always painted cities and this is the first time I'm going to paint a country, the biggest country in the world. This painting will be a

milestone for me."

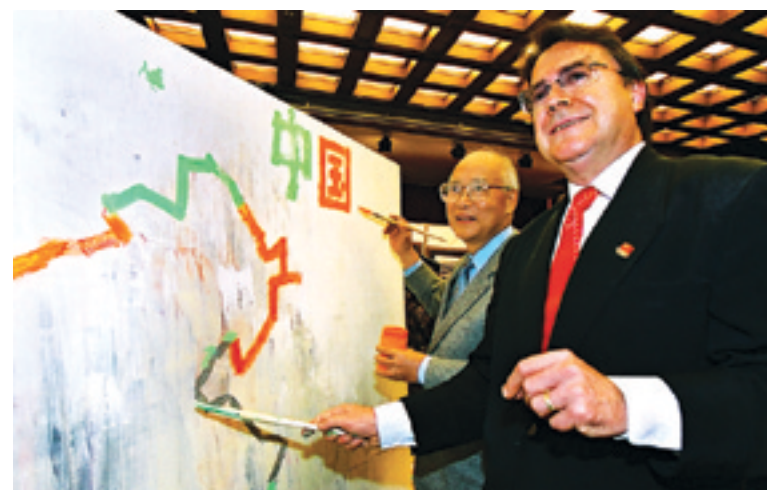
He also gave special thanks to Dr. He Zhenliang, honorary president of the Beijing Olympic Committee, who gave him the idea for the new painting.

With roughly the same dimensions as *Beijing Cityscape*, about three meters wide and two meters tall, the new oil painting will portray landmarks from nine Chinese cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Macao, Hong Kong and Taipei.

Billich's latest work should be unveiled before the start of the Athens Olympics this summer.

Regarding his particular interest in the Olympics, he said, "As an artist, my pursuit is beauty and peace. I'm a strong believer in sport and the message of the Olympic movement. Sport is good for all. We should have peace, not war. That was the message in ancient Greece over 2,000 years ago and the same message of the Olympic movement today."

Beijing Cityscape was used as the official image of the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee during its bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games and hung in a prominent spot in the Beijing Hotel during the International Olympic Committee inspectors' stay in February 2001.



Charles Billich and Dr. He Zhenliang cooperate in an impromptu painting of China at Monday's press conference.
Photo by Wang Xiaoxi

Fortune in Ancient Copper

Coins Unearthed

By Xiao Yingying

Over 500 kilograms of ancient copper coins were unexpectedly unearthed at a construction site in Daxing District last Thursday.

Underneath around a half-meter of soil, workers at the construction site discovered a soft patch revealing a cellar made of blue bricks. Inside the cellar were thousands of coins, most from the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and other forged during the Han (206BC-220AD), Tang (618-907) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties.

One of the workers called the police, who quickly arrived at the scene to keep other people from walking away with the valuable coins. Dong Tao, an officer in the Daxing Public Security Bureau told *Beijing Today* that two sacks filled with copper coins were found in one person's car and retrieved.

"The sacks are so heavy that two people can't pick one up. The

coins we found in the van were just a fraction of the whole find," Dong said.

The coins were all later transferred to the Daxing District Cultural Relics Bureau.

Li Chunshan, director of that unit, told *Beijing Today* that most of the coins, despite being covered with a green patina, were remarkably intact and the markings of their dates of circulation were very visible.

Such large finds of ancient coins are rare not only in Daxing but in all of Beijing, according to Li.

One of the major questions raised by the chance excavation is why so many coins from the Song, which held southern China, would be found in the former territory of the rival northern Liao empire, perhaps an indication of more extensive exchange between the two ancient dynasties than previously believed by historians.



Photo by Wang Jiangang



Photo by Kun Ge

Teacher Crowned Chinese Miss Universe

By Zhou Ying

Zhang Meng, a piano teacher and host of an educational TV program in Tianjin was named China's Miss Universe at the beauty

pageant's regional finals held in Kunming, Yunnan Province Wednesday evening.

She will head to Ecuador in June for a shot at the 2004 Miss Universe crown.

Russians Nabbed for Duty-free Theft

By Zhang Jianzhong

A group of Russian football players were stopped by police at Beijing Capital International Airport last Friday after attempting to shoplift goods worth over 20,000 yuan from an airport duty-free store.

An official from the public relations department of the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, speaking under condition of anonymity, told *Beijing Today* that the Russians were from the Irtysh football team and had been invited to China for a friendly visit. He added they returned most of the goods and paid compensation for others damaged or thrown away in haste before flying back to Russia at noon that day.

A Miss Li, a passenger in the store at the time of the incident, told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Saturday, "They were all wearing

identical blue coats and put lots of items in their pockets and bags without paying."

She added that several other people in the store witnessed the thefts and then told store clerks to be wary.

Shop staff immediately checked their stock and discovered a number of goods missing. The manager then quickly contacted the local police, who arrived at the scene 10 minutes later. The police managed to stop the Russian men as they were preparing to board their flight.

The police demanded the football players go through airport security checks again. As the men lined up at the security checkpoint, a few suddenly broke off and raced into a nearby bathroom. Police officers followed them and discovered several bottles of high-quality

perfume thrown into toilets and three abandoned bags filled with wine.

A slew of other bottles of perfume, CDs, boxes of chocolate, handicrafts and other duty-free goods were found stashed in nearby garbage cans and flowerpots.

The Irtysh Football Club has paid the store compensation for all goods abandoned or damaged by the players to the total tune of over 10,000 yuan.



The Russian players were detained at the airport after the attempted theft.
Photo by Zhang Jian

Court Rules Against Famed Nude Model

By Zhou Ying

The latest round of scandal around a book of artful nude photographs published in 2003 ended badly for the model, dancer Tang Jiali. The Chaoyang District People's Court ruled on Tuesday that she had to pay the photographer of the bare shots 100,000 yuan in compensation for copyright infringement and publicly apologize to him.

Photographer Zhang Xulong filed his lawsuit following the release of the controversial book, called *Tang Jiali's Nude Art*. He had signed an agreement with Tang to do the shoot in 2001, after which she signed a publica-

tion contract with the agreement with the People's Arts Publishing Company. What angered Zhang was that Tang signed her name at the end of the book, implying authorship, and was given royalties by the publisher, while the photographer insisted the book should bear his name and be considered his work. In his lawsuit, Zhang demanded Tang give him 206,080 yuan and a public apology in compensation.

The book of nude photos caused a nationwide stir and made Tang, formerly a dancer with the China National Song and Dance Ensemble, a household name. She has gone on

to become a part-time news anchor in Nanjing and an actress.

On her personal web site, Tang said she had little to say about the lawsuit. "I have not decided whether or not to appeal the judgment to a higher court or just pay up and avoid any further trouble," she said.

Tang's lawyer, who would not give his name, told the *Beijing Daily Messenger* on Wednesday that the settlement figure was not outside of expectations, while Zhang's lawyer said his client was basically satisfied and would not pursue the case further.



Students at Tsinghua University line up to get their loans.

Photo by Photocomer

By Chu Meng

The trouble with loans is you never know if they're going to be paid back, particularly if the borrowers are needy students.

On April 12 this year, an angry official letter titled "Notice for the Return of National Educational Aid Loans" was released on the website of China University of Political Science and Law. The letter listed the names of 189 students who had been loaned money and who had failed to pay it back. The letter also said the loans had now been suspended.

In October 1999, China University of Political Science and Law decided to cooperate in an experiment with the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Beijing Xijiekou Branch. The bank signed an agreement granting National

Educational Aid Loans to college students who were in serious need of financial support. The loans were based on a contract signed by the university, ICBC and the students, with the university as guarantor. The students were allotted four years after graduation to pay back the loans and the interest accrued.

The scheme proved popular and roughly 1,880 students signed up to borrow a total of 27.9 million yuan. But by March 20 this year, 189 of them had not paid back the debt in time and more than 700 are running

out of time to pay. So ICBC has ceased granting such educational aid loans to any students.

The bank's decision has engendered a hot discussion of the morality of college students. Should banks stop providing such loans? Should universities bear such responsibilities? Or are the students immoral in not paying off their debts? **Zhang Jian (pseudonym), graduate from a famous university in Beijing**

Yes, I haven't paid back my 20,000 yuan loan, because I have my own difficulties. First, my family is very poor. Though

I have graduated and work in a small company, I can barely cover me and my family's living expenses.

In order to earn a higher salary, or rather in order to pay off my debt, a Bachelor's degree is far from enough. I have enrolled in a Master's course for people who can study at the weekend while working in the rest of the week. But the charge is still very high - more than 10,000 yuan each academic year. So I had to discuss this situation with my university. Should I pay back the loan or continue studying?

I have changed many jobs and living places, and left my details in the Personnel Exchange Center, a public administrative organization for job hunters. That way it's hard for the university and bank to keep track of me.

Lin Bai, associate professor with the International Communication Department of Beijing Broadcasting University

I think banks should continue to grant educational aid, because helping talented students finish their studies is a good thing and a responsibility

of our country. But universities should not act as guarantors, because they do not have the money to pay banks back if students fail to honor their contracts.

In fact, morality is improved by education, among families, universities and society. It seems that we give money to students and students are supported by us. Actually, we just act as a bridge. Moreover, we don't have any responsibilities to students after their graduation. And we cannot keep in touch with them because they take away their archives and residence booklets at the same time.

In my opinion, the government should encourage non-governmental organizations to take part in this kind of thing, because the cultivation of talented youngsters is a duty for all of society, not only the government and universities. The government could establish foundations whose capital could be provided by both governmental financial allocations and donations from organizations, thus avoiding banks taking all the risks. Ideally, the government should be able to offer a lump-sum grant that needn't be paid back. That would be much better.

An officer from the Administration Office of ICBC, Beijing Branch, who declined to give his name

About this question I cannot say much to the media. But this is a high-risk type of loan without real guarantors, because universities cannot pay the debt if the students don't. State-owned banks are in the process of a commercial transformation and preparing for a listing on the stock market, and bad loans are the most important barrier to this process.

Banks are not charity organizations. They are run to make a profit. So they must look at the question from an angle of commercial interests. So you can't criticize them too much for hesitating over this kind of loan.

Xia Yeliang, economist and associate professor with Peking University School of Economics

I'd say non-repayment of national educational aid loans was a fairly marginal moral issue. It has little meaning in our society that is transforming itself into a commercialized one. From an economic point of view, if a person doesn't repay a loan, he then violates his personal commercial credit.

But the power of credit is very weak in china. Merely relying on the power of morality is not that effective. In fact, we cannot call it a loan, it is more like charity. Because without rigid restrictions, of course students won't pay back money if they do not want to.

There is no clear standard to judge the financial capacities of these students. For example, they could buy a Benz and a luxury house and still say they are unable to pay back the loan. Why? Because they have no extra money having bought the cars and houses. This is a question of 'morality deadline'. But this example shows us there is actually no such thing nowadays in China. Unless banks have the right to requisition the Benz and the house, this is going to happen.

He Guanglu, philosopher and researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Those subsidized students signed contracts and promised to repay the money. Even if they become rich in future and still decline to pay, a kind of moral struggle will exist in their minds, because they will not be able to get rid of those memories. I believe they will think about it, and thinking is progress. Then there will be self-education and moral self-examination, qualities that are urgently needed in our society.

We should trust the students, trust their humanity. Of course people's minds can change, and just because of the possibility of this change, that is why we have schools and tutors.

How Public is Your Toilet?

By Zhou Ying

Need to pee? Now you can, anywhere. From now on those "for patrons only" signs above toilets in restaurants and bars are going to be illegal. According to a new report from the Beijing Legal System Office, Regulations For Supervising Public Bathrooms in Beijing, toilets in shops, restaurants, stores, and plazas will have to be open to all the public.

The former regulations, which have been in place for 14 years, were mainly about cleaning. But the new regulations aim to meet society's most pressing needs. The new legislation says that public bathrooms are not only those invested in and built by the state, but also the toilets in service outlets, such as hotels, restaurants and bars.

The Beijing municipal management committee called for new restaurants, hotels and stores to build their own toilets and open them to the public two years ago, but this is the first time that the government has legislated rules to standardize it.

The new legislation has produced a vigorous reaction from the public. Most people seem to be in favor, but some have pointed out that perhaps it's not the government's business to force this kind of thing on enterprises.

Yang Yan, a professor with the humanities department of the Second Medicine Liberation Army University

Of course the hotels, restau-

rants, and stores are in the public domain, but the toilets cannot be described as public bathrooms, because they are built as an inner service facility by the investors rather than the government. These toilets are privately owned by the service outlets, so the investors, owners and operators should have the right of use, and they should be able to determine who can use them and who can not. It is just the same as house owners not allowing strangers to use the toilets in their house.

The hotels, restaurants, and stores can make their toilets public, but I say they "can" rather than they "must". The citizens and government can appeal and advocate, and the public can criticize the traders who close their doors to people who just want to use the toilets. But the government does not have the right to force them to make the toilets public by law.

As a matter of fact, many stores, restaurants, and hotels have already made their toilets open to the public, because businesspeople have realized that this can bring in potential customers. Restaurants like McDonald's and KFC have built a good reputation by allowing the public to use their toilets. We should praise those businesses that do this of their own accord, but the government should understand that the businesses should not bear responsibility for solving the problems of public

bathrooms.

Yao Guojian, a teacher with the China University of Political Science and Law

I believe that the government took public interest into consideration before deciding on this regulation.

Public bathrooms are a public service issue and one that is the government's responsibility. Owing to the high costs of public bathroom management, the government has the right to order establishments to open their toilets to the public in order to economize on social resources.

Looking at this matter from an enterprise's point of view, we can see that their purpose in building toilets is to develop their service. To open toilets to the public will inevitably disturb the normal operation of their enterprise, to some extent, and infringe on the enterprise's legal rights.

Aiming at safeguarding the people's immediate interests, the government wishes to standardize the public bathrooms by setting regulations, but it should avoid infringing on other people's legal rights. The government should keep a balance between the public interests and those of enterprises through negotiation.

Olivia Jiang, a graduate student from Beijing Broadcasting Institute

There are both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it will provide great convenience to the public. But for the service trades, I think it will be tough. Just imagine if a hotel became a public place; it would be a disadvantage for the guests. Moreover, it would bring about problems for public security and management.

I want to have a free and quiet dinner environment, without being disturbed. So I personally oppose this regulation. How can I enjoy my dinner in a place where anybody can come in to go to the toilet. It is really a terrible piece of news. In addition, toilets in restaurants are always very clean and cozy. I cannot imagine what they will be like after being made public.

The government officials want to solve the public problem with toilets, but I think they neglect the feelings of the citizens. This regulation could have a great impact on the service trades in Beijing, especially the high-grade service trades, such as Starbucks or Island Cafe. I will really feel uncomfortable if the place where I drink coffee gives free access to the public. And as far as I know, people who use high-grade services tend to have a superiority complex. They pay a lot of attention to privacy.

Shang Jing, a reporter with a local newspaper in Wenzhou Province

This legislation is a kind of internationalization. In the US, according to American law, the toilets in every public site and commercial house must be open

to the public. Maybe that is why the American government does not have such a headache with public bathrooms.

In urban areas, all the shopping malls, restaurants, and supermarkets have well-equipped toilets. You can use their toilets even if you're not using their services. Actually businesspeople in the US believe that as long as you stay there, you can bring them benefits.

I think the new legislation can reduce the costs of public bathrooms for the government. Also it can decrease the cost of maintenance. It could even enhance the sense of responsibility of the public.

Wang Honggang, manager of a Western fast food restaurant

I think it a matter of management concept. Our restaurant opened its toilets to the public before any government legislation required it. Our concept is that we treat every person that enters our restaurant as a guest, even if they don't consume our food.

Maybe they come in looking for the toilet, but then they see our service and food. No matter how tiny the impression is, I really think it is a good chance for us to introduce our restaurant to more customers. For us, public praise is something we pay a lot of attention to.

Under such competitive circumstances, I cannot imagine how enterprises that close their doors to potential customers can survive.

By Dong Nan

Are you bothered by people spitting in the street or letting their dogs defecate all over the place? A survey conducted by Beijing Social Mental-ity Research Academy this March found that although Beijing people are paying much more attention to antisocial behavior like this than a few years ago, there's still plenty of room for improvement. In 2001, 52% of participants in a similar survey said that the civic behavior of Beijingers was "bad". In the recent survey, only 7% were so critical.

However, respondents still had many complaints about the uncivilized aspects of city life. These complaints focused mainly on public sanitation, traffic, environmental problems and public decency.

Sanitation

Dog poop appears to be a growing problem. More than half of the participants in the survey said they often saw pets, particularly dogs, leaving their stools all over the place in communities, and the owners rarely clean up the mess.

"I moved into my community in 1998. At that time, there were not so many dogs," said Gao, a retired engineer, to *Beijing Today*. "But since 2000, people have bought more and more dogs, and now you can see stool everywhere."

"Dogs are not like people," countered Wang Shihai, a dog owner in the same community. "You can't tell when they're going to misbehave. I tried training my dog to defecate at home, but I wasn't entirely successful. How can you expect animals to have the right manners in public all the time? Sometimes when I am talking with someone, my dog runs away and leaves a stool somewhere. How can I find out where?"

Wang said he always picked up his dog's stool when he could find it.

"Every night when I clear up the community I can see countless dog stools, some under trees, some on the lawn," said Yu, a 50-year-old sanitation worker for the community. "Whenever I see those things, I tell myself that it is my job, it does not matter. But it's really annoying. I would be happier if the dog owners cleaned it up."

Spitting is another problem that is often complained about. In the survey, 52% of the participants said they often saw people expectorating in the streets.

However, participants said this was less of a problem in their communities. Spitting is much worse in public spaces with crowds of people such as streets and railway stations.

"The reason is simple," said one respondent in the survey. "No one spits on the ground near their home, since that's their space. But in public places it's different.

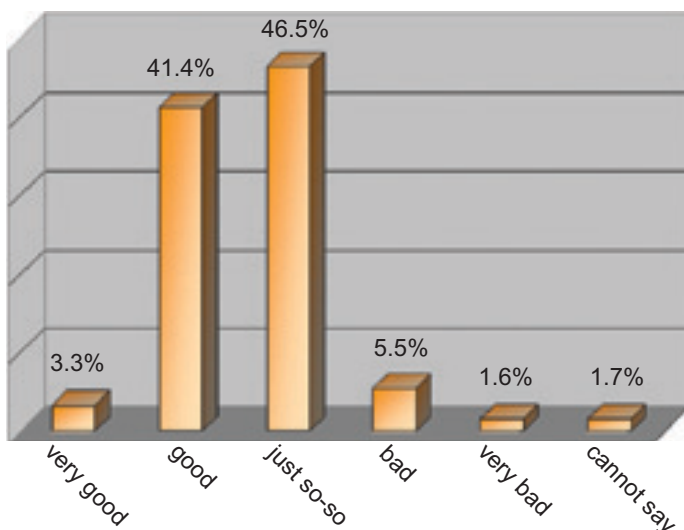
Are You Civic Minded?



What bunch of louts caused this mess?

Photo by Photocom

How do you rate Beijing people's civic behavior?



Many people do not have the self-consciousness to observe cleanliness in public places."

More than 70% of the participants complained about the endless leaflets and pieces of paper advertising products and services. It's seen as a source of much of the rubbish cluttering Beijing's streets.

"Wherever you go, people hand you these advertising papers, especially on bridges or at doors of shopping malls and markets," said Du Pingyun, a university student. "Some of them are for training courses, some are about housing. They tuck the papers

into your hands, and you need more than two hands to hold all of it. I try my best to put those papers into dustbins, but sometimes I just throw them away on the ground," Du said.

Traffic

Two thirds of the participants were regular users of public transport including buses and subways. According to the survey, complaints about the scramble onto buses and trains were less than in previous years.

"Though many buses are still crowded, it is better than it was before," said Du Pingyun. "I remember three years ago, I often

saw people hanging on the doors of buses if there were too many passengers and they could not manage to crowd onboard. Now you don't see such things. I think it is because there are more buses and more choice of bus lines. If people cannot take this one, they can wait for the next, and they come much sooner than they used to."

However, new problems have also arisen. Along with the increase in the number of private cars and new drivers, more people are complaining about driving manners. According to the survey, 47% of the participants complained about the number of aggressive drivers in Beijing.

"It's not everyday, but almost every hour that I come across aggressive drivers," said Lin Tong, a taxi driver in his thirties to *Beijing Today*. "They blow their horns without hesitation and don't slow down. They thrust themselves in your way in narrow spaces and they do not bother to thank you if you give way."

Drivers also complained about pedestrians and bike riders.

"I bet they never look at the traffic lights," said Lin Tong, "especially pedestrians. I understand everyone is busy. But you should wait till the red light is off, shouldn't you? It only takes one minute."

Liang works at the crossroads by Guomao. His duty is to keep pedestrians who want to cross over the street on the pavement while the light is red. He says there are always people who cross over while the light is red, no matter how hard he yells at them.

What about the environment?

According to the survey, Beijing people's sense of the need for environmental protection has developed greatly. Most respondents said they considered protecting the environment part of their civic duties. However, there are still obvious problems, and many people think that more government guidance is needed.

The survey found that 78% of the participants felt uncomfortable about always using the cheap plastic bags handed out by most shops, and 48% mentioned how restaurants often provide plastic cutlery for short orders and takeaways.

"I do care about environmental protection, but one will not refuse to buy things in the nearest shop just because they use plastic bags. To most people, convenience is the first consideration," said Gao. He said the government should pay more attention to the issue and punish shops and restaurants who distribute too many plastic items.

Rubbish recycling is another issue, more than two thirds ad-

mitting they weren't sure which types of rubbish could be recycled and which couldn't.

"There isn't any recycling equipment in our community at all," said Liang, a 37-year-old woman living in Yayuncun, to *Beijing Today*. "I have seen recycling bins on prosperous streets such as Xidan and Wangfujing - two bins are put together, one for recycling, the other for non-recyclable rubbish. But there are none in our community. I think the government should do more to popularize recycling, and the media should publicize it."

About 35% of the participants complained about *chuan* (kebab) vendors on the street. Owners of those booths, mainly without licenses, bake the kebabs on the burning coals all day. Some think the food is delicious and convenient, while others think it is dirty, and that the smoke is a pollutant.

"It is dirty, and the smoke is choking, but young people, especially students, can't get enough of it," complained Liu, a resident in Zhanlanlu, Xicheng district. "And then they just throw those bamboo sticks away on the ground after they finish eating."

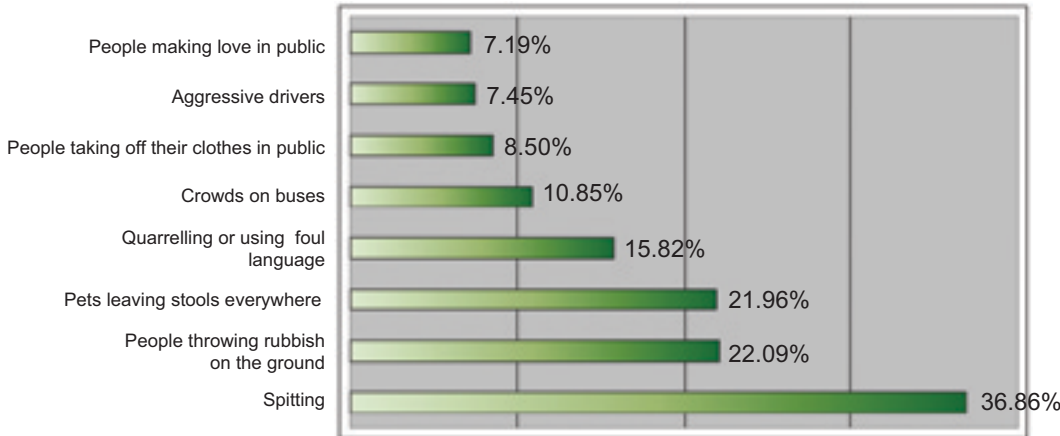
Public decency

"Except for a few people, generally speaking, Beijing people's public decency is fine," the report claimed.

According to the survey, people complained about various examples of indecent public behavior. The most common problem was people making love in public (42.4%), followed by people taking off their clothes, shoes or smoking in public (36.5%), quarrelling or creating some disturbance (22%), using foul language (22%) and people making a noise in quiet public places (21%).

"I think public decency relates to one's freedom to a certain extent," said Gao. "If lovers wish to be intimate and do not care if others see them, if men take off their shirts to cool down, or if people quarrel in the street, just let them be. But I still believe that it is better to behave properly in public than not."

What kinds of behavior do you find most offensive?



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By Sun Ming

Nearly 200 children have gone missing from the migrant worker communities on the outskirts of Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, since 2001. Till now, only a few of them have been found.

CCTV broadcast a report on the criminal epidemic on Sunday. According to the program *Economic Half-Hour*, the missing children are nearly all from families of migrant workers in Kunming. Human traffickers are believed to be responsible.

"The kidnapping of the children reflects the lack of any proper management in these 'urban villages'. Actually, this is a common problem, partly caused by the high-speed urbanization in the country," Liu Gang, a sociology expert from China's Academy of Social Sciences told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

Rate of kidnapping on the rise

Most male migrant workers in Kunming look for jobs on construction sites or work delivering water canisters, while their wives usually sell fruit or vegetables.

For the lower rent and cost of living, migrant families usually live on the outskirts of town, areas known as "urban villages" by local people.

Wang Xingpu, 34, works for a construction company and lives in Hufu village in eastern Kunming. In October last year, he lost his two sons and has been unable to find any clues about what happened to them since.

"I came back from work very late every day. My wife was too tired to watch over them all the time. They were just playing in the yard before they went missing," Wang told a reporter from *Economic Half-Hour*.

In the past six months, Wang has spent most of his time searching desperately for his sons. He has tried to contact other parents who have also lost their children in order to get more clues. So far he has contacted nearly 200 families.

Wang showed the CCTV re-

Kidnappers Prey on Migrant Families



Is anyone watching over this child?
Photo by Photocom

Half an hour later, their daughter came back by herself. She said that her younger brother had been taken away by a stranger.

"I rushed out to chase after my son, but I couldn't find him. How can we find him? It seems we are looking for a needle in a haystack." Qin wept as she told her story to a reporter from *Economic Half-Hour*.

Wan Junxia's son was stolen after she went to a nearby market in December last year. Her husband, a water deliverer in Kunming, was also not at home. Their son was only alone for half an hour.

"I locked the door. But when I returned home, I found that the lock had been picked. Nothing was missing, except my son," she said.

Ma Ning, director of the Guandu Public Security Bureau, told *Beijing Today* that it's very hard to find the missing children, because the human traffickers have established such a sophisticated routine.

"They can sell the children to other provinces in a very short time. When we arrive to check the railway station or long-distance bus station, they have already left Kunming," said Ma.

Usually the only way police can find the missing children is if they receive a tip-off from neighbors of the family that bought the children.

A policeman from Kunming Municipal Public Security Bureau said that they haven't calculated the number of missing children in the whole of Kunming.

Human trafficking is a profitable business. One child can fetch between 10,000 and 20,000 yuan.

Migrant children most at risk

"Migrant workers have no time or energy to watch over their children. They usually ask their neighbors to do it," Ma Ning pointed out.

Most migrant couples have to work during the day and only come back home late in the evening. Also, they cannot afford to send their children to nursery school. So the children just stay at home until they're old enough to enter state school.

Liu Gang, a sociology expert from China's Academy of Social Sciences, indicated that the lack of management by the local authorities in areas where migrant workers gather is also an important reason for the blight of the human traffickers.

According to Guandu Public Security Bureau, over two million migrant workers live in the Guandu and Xishan districts on the edge of Kunming. The permanent residents in the two districts only make up about 50 percent of that number.

"It's true that the social environment of the areas is not very good. There are big floating populations there," Ma admitted to *Beijing Today*.

The CCTV program on Sunday showed a reporter visiting Hufu village in Guandu District. The reporter took a taxi from downtown Kunming to the village. When leaning that the reporter planned to go to the village, the taxi driver advised him to take care.

"It's in chaos there. We seldom go there," said the driver.

"The village is very noisy and crowded. You can hear many different accents, which shows how many different places the people come from. According to local police, the village has people from 27 provinces," said the program.

"Criminal cases here are common and human traffickers often visit our village," a resident of Hufu village told the reporter.

porter a list he had made with the names of 161 missing children. Most of the children are boys and their ages range from one to six. Most of the children had lived in Guandu and Xishan districts in the suburbs of Kunming.

"Over 50 percent of the residents in those districts are migrant workers from around the country," said the CCTV report. "Most missing children are taken while playing near their home."

According to Wang's list, three

children went missing in 2001, 30 in 2002, 67 last year and 21 so far this year.

Hard to find the missing children

For the migrant workers, the only solution seems to be searching for their missing children themselves. It becomes all-consuming work for them.

Li Huaming, the father of a missing boy, often accompanied other parents looking for their missing children. "I know it's hard to find my son this way, but I don't

want to give up. In the past two years, I've been to many provinces. I don't have much money left," he told *Economic Half-Hour*.

Wang Zongcan and Li Yuncui have put up over 100 "missing" notices in Kunming since their four-year-old son Wang Guoling went missing on April 1.

"Up to now, we haven't gotten any clues," said Li. Li said that she and her husband hadn't time to take care of their son who often played outside with other chil-

dren. The couple, from Guizhou Province, run a small grocery store in Gaozhu village in Guandu District.

"We weren't even concerned that he wasn't around until it was time for dinner. He went out to play after lunch," said Li. "We don't know what we can do to find him."

Liu Ligang and Qin Xiaoping lost their three-year-old son on March 17 this year. Their five-year-old daughter took their son to a nearby store after lunch that day.

By Wang Fang

On April 24, Ma Jiajue was found guilty of killing four of his fellow students at Yunnan University by Kunming Intermediate People's Court.

The court sentenced him to death and he accepted the penalty, saying he was ready to pay the price for his crime. The court also ruled that the families of the victims should each receive compensation of 20,000 yuan, and said that Ma should be responsible for the compensation.

However, members of his family expressed some doubts over the case and hope to persuade Ma to appeal.

Manhunt

Ma Jiajue, 24, was accused of killing four students between February 13 and 15 this year. The bodies of the victims were found in dormitory lockers on February 23. All had been bludgeoned with a blunt metal object and had been carefully covered with newspaper and tape before being put in the lockers. Suspicion fell on Ma after he went missing, and fingerprint matching confirmed him as the chief suspect.

A national manhunt began and the Chinese Ministry of Public Security offered a 200,000 yuan reward for information leading to his arrest. For the next three weeks, as news of the case spread around the country, sightings were reported all over China and numerous men of similar appearance to Ma were arrested and questioned by police.

Then came news came from Sanya, Hainan that he had finally been caught on March 15, 21 days after he first went missing from Yunnan University. He'd been spotted by a local mechanic, Chen Xianzhuang, who recognized Ma's face from the numerous "wanted" posters, even though the suspect was by now dirty, disheveled and

dressed like a beggar.

At first, the suspect denied that he was Ma Jiajue. But as police found evidence of his identity in his belongings he relented and confessed that he had murdered the four students. To general surprise, Ma said the cause of his murderous rage was nothing more than a falling out over a game of cards. He told CCTV that the four students, whom he had considered friends, accused him of cheating. "This quarrel made me feel quite surprised and sad. I thought about it a lot and I despaired. I decided to kill them. I felt regret later but I did not want to confess the crime to the police."

He explained that if he confessed to the police, he would be sentenced to life imprisonment but if he was caught, it would be capital punishment. He said he preferred the latter.

Ma's family

Ma Jiajue was born to a family of farmers in Binyang, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. After hearing that their son was the chief suspect in the murder case, Ma's parents and family members could not believe it. His mother even became ill and had to take to her bed.

While Ma was on the run, his father, Ma Jianfu, tried to communicate with him through the media, asking to turn himself in to the police. When informed of his son's arrest, Ma Jianfu was surprisingly calm. "It was going to happen sooner or later," he said. He told Shanghai Morning Post that he wanted to see his son and ask him why he had committed such a crime.

In court, Ma Jianfu finally got to see his son, but he couldn't bear to sit any closer than the back row of the hall.



Ma's sister tried to shed some light on why her brother might have committed the crime. "We always told him he had to learn how to bear unfair treatment and not cause trouble. But we felt that we did not treat him as he deserved. He was the youngest son in the family, but our parents had spent all their money on our education and there was nothing left for him." Asked if Ma would appeal to a higher court if he was sentenced to death, his sister replied, "we hope he can appeal, and our lawyer will try to persuade him to appeal as well."

When the judge announced the death sentence, Ma's sister stood up suddenly and shouted in Guangxi dialect, "Brother, you must appeal so that we can have another chance to see you." Ma Jiajue looked towards her. His father was sitting on his seat without any expression on his face.

The victims' families

The victims' families were also present in court. They said they wanted to hear Ma Jiajue apologize. They also wanted to try and find out why Ma had decided to kill their sons.

In court, Ma appeared to

accept his guilt. "This case was a tragedy," he said. "The way I killed them was unforgivable. I will take responsibility. I expect to be sentenced to death. I also hope my peers can draw a lesson from what I did."

The mother of Yang Kaihong, one of the victims, was unmoved by this apology. "He is evil," she said afterwards. She and her family left Kunming before the announcement of the sentence. For them, the only important thing was to see Ma found guilty. They didn't care about the sentence.

The parents of Gong Bo, another of the victims, could not bear to attend the trial. They thought they would not be able to control their feelings in the court. Shao Weiqing, the father of Shao Ruijie, another of the victims, came to the trial but was also emotional. Whenever his son was mentioned, he could not hold back his tears.

A few hours after the trial on April 24, Ma Jiajue's parents, sister and grandma went to Shao Weiqing's home in Zhoumu, Dieshan, Wuzhou to try to apologize. But Shao Weiqing and his wife refused to see them.

It was raining heavily but Ma Jiajue's family simply waited outside Shao Weiqing's home. After an hour, Shao and his wife were moved and agreed to talk with them, but only through an intermediary from the local government, not face to face.

Some doubtful points

The sentence handed down to Ma clearly demonstrated that the court believed that he was of sound mind when he committed the crime. However, some of Ma's family members believe there are some doubtful points in the whole case that need to be clarified.

One thing they all said was that Ma had always seemed gentle and sensitive. His sister said Ma would be afraid of killing a chicken let alone his friends. She was also surprised that he would stay at the scene of the crime for three days before fleeing from the university campus.

Also, everyone said that Ma appeared to have prepared everything beforehand. But in that case, why did he leave the murder weapon (a hammer) behind at the scene?

However, Professor Li Meijin from the Criminal Psychology Department of Gong'an University didn't think it was so hard to understand.

He said that as the youngest child in the family, Ma was probably used to being spoiled and might have been fairly self-centered. But even though he was clearly intelligent, coming from a poor family would have made him feel inferior to others, the professor said. The dramatic difference between life in a rural area and the university could also have made him introverted and possibly resentful. Besides, all the evidence pointed to Ma being in a stable frame of mind when he committed the crime.

By Lü Pinrou

Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* has arrived in Beijing and is being spiced up with a little local flavor. During performances at the Great Hall of the People, the show's interactive element is supplied by local performers. In their cat outfits, they run about and cavort with the audience during the interval. There's been no shortage of applicants, so judges had to narrow the field down to 10 lucky local cats.

They appear in the break between the two acts, a period of about 15 minutes. Although it's only a short time compared with the total performance of 150 minutes, these performers had to go through a series of very competitive and demanding tests.

The director set various standards for being a "cat". The performers should have a solid foundation of dancing and singing, preferably with some professional training. Some acrobatics or gymnastics skills are a plus, and a little English is also a bonus as most of the regular cast are foreigners. Most of all, they must be able to improvise, showing the characteristics of a real cat.

From hundreds of people who signed up, 50 were short listed to compete in the first round. Among them, around 20 had the chance to face the foreign experts' rigid examination. Finally the most excellent 10 were chosen to take part in the performance. The lucky ones have been rehearsing with the foreign cats in Tianqiao Theater and The Great Hall of the People since April 15.

Crouching, meowing, licking, under the strict training of the professionals, these "local cats" have been doing their best to imitate cute and playful cats. Most of them are aged around 20 and already have a lot of performing experience. Some are acrobats and others are from the Beijing Dance Academy. Every day, they have to exercise from 9 am to 11 pm, with very short breaks. Time and time again, they try different moves and actions, some successful, some requiring a little revision. Under the bright stage lights and moving in time with the music, the local cats are having to sweat for this moment. They all want to exhibit their abilities to the audience in China, and try to match the foreign cast.

When asked what it was like to take part in the performance of this world famous melodrama, Huang Wei, a sophomore from Beijing Dance Academy, told us that he cherished this opportunity. He said he decided to try and get into *Cats* mainly to see how the actors and actresses from abroad conducted the drama. He felt that the basic skills of the Chinese performers were no worse than the foreign actors, but he felt the foreign pros were better able to fling themselves into the story wholeheartedly, and express themselves fully.

The opening curtain for the world renowned musical came on April 27, marking the beginning of the Second Beijing International Opera Season. The show will run until the end of May.

So if you go to the Great Hall of the People to enjoy this musical extravaganza, you can see the vivid performance of the local cats. In the aisle, off the stage, the cats will be jumping and running around you, making faces or pulling your cuffs. It's sure to be a treat.



Crouching Cat, Hidden Talent



A scene from the show

Photos by Cui Jun



Getting into character



Miaow

By Darlene Lee

Born in 1952, artist and entrepreneur Huang Rui has spent most of his life going against the grain, refusing to submit meekly to the prevailing ideas or institutions. Initiating or participating in many of the earliest contemporary art activities in China, Huang has become a key mover and shaker in the art scene of the capital today.

Huang has been a particularly dynamic force in the development and growth of the contemporary art district at Dashanzi as one of the first artists to open a studio there in early 2002. These days he's also chief editor of a book on Dashanzi due out this month, and Artistic Director for the Beijing Tokyo Art Project Gallery. He also founded At Cafe, one of the district's first coffee shops. Somehow he also finds the time to continue to create his own artwork.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about your early interest and training in art?

HR: I was born in 1952 in Beijing and have loved drawing since childhood. In kindergarten, I began studying traditional landscape painting from a classmate's father who happened to be Xie Tianming, a pupil of the famed Zhang Daqian. My teacher died in 1967 during the Cultural Revolution. After he was jailed, he contracted a serious illness and died after he was released.

I continued to draw and paint on my own in Inner Mongolia where I spent the next six years. I tried three times to get into university. I passed the entrance exams for the architecture program at Tsinghua University but the exam results were declared void that year. I tried again at the Central Academy of Drama and the Central Academy of Fine Arts but I didn't get in.

When I saw people with much less accomplished drawing skills breeze into school, I decided to forget about testing and university. I just figured this wasn't for me.

Q: How did you get involved with Dashanzi?

HR: In 1984, I went to Japan. I had just got married and my wife was Japanese. Though I came back in 2001, it wasn't until 2002 that I got my own space here in Dashanzi. Even when I was studying traditional painting, I could feel there were a lot of unresolved problems with it. I had similar feelings about western contemporary art which I studied next. There was something wrong with both systems, which made it difficult to fully express what I wanted to do. It's part of the reason I experimented in so many different mediums from poetry to events to performance art.

Dashanzi resulted from my realization about how important the environment is to me, having my own space. I believe it's about creating that space, rather than floating from one to another trying to 'find' the perfect space. It's a place for us to see what we can do, not just to preserve it but to make it a living entity.

An essential problem in art is passivity with regard to the environment. One can't rebel against it, since that will just mean

being stomped on with a large boot. My interest is not in making Dashanzi 'hot' but to create something organic which is subservient neither to the official views of art nor the international critics. This is our world which follows our rules.

Q: Can you tell us a bit more about your motivations for the various innovations you've launched at Dashanzi?

HR: Lots of people thought I was completely crazy to do a festival [The Dashanzi International Art Festival (DIAF) opens on April 24]. I understand why lots of well-known curators won't join because we're also not playing by western rules. The festival is really a kind of confirmation of the creative freedom one finds in Dashanzi and a chance to share this with everyone.

When I first opened At Cafe, no one was doing coffee shops – everyone was doing bars, to copy Sanlitun. But I knew that a coffee shop was what I wanted to do. Now, business is so brisk that I turn down offers all the time to franchise or expand.

As for the book, Robert Bernell from Timezone 8 and I had the idea for a book

Modern Iconoclast

about Dashanzi. The idea was to create an organized record of its history and its unique place in the contemporary art scene today. The book will be published later in April, with the official launch in May. It's important to me that we're contributing something substantive to the art dialogue, though for me, being a figure in history is completely irrelevant.

Q: How do you still find time for your own art?

HR: I don't have as much time as I'd like for art, but I am creating something new especially for DIAF. It's a continuation from my last series [large photo montages which juxtapose consumer images with traditional Chinese cultural motifs] to take a humorous look at shifting perception of tangible things which become something else in the viewer's eyes. The piece will be a ping pong table constructed of stringed and other musical instruments, so that the bouncing ball will create music - sort of art and performance combined.

Q: What's your philosophy?

HR: Past experience made me feel that what I was doing was reasonable. The thing that helps me avoid giving up is seeing how I've gained from each experience, rather than having lost something each time.

I think my philosophy of life is much the same as everyone else's, but maybe my point of entry is different. I'm especially interested in the forces of nature, and this is the background to everything that I do. Any time I have, I just sit outside – it's a useful way to get some perspective on the bigger picture.

Precious Buddhist Relic Revealed

By Zhang Huan

It is almost 1,400 years since Buddhist monk Xuanzang made his famous journey to the west to bring Buddhist scriptures to China. The Tang Dynasty monk's travels are the source of many legends and the inspiration for the Ming Dynasty novel *Journey to the West*, one of the classics of Chinese literature.

It has long been speculated that some bone fragments from the skull of Xuanzang existed somewhere in China, but until recently, there were few facts to support the rumors. Earlier this month, the abbot of Wenshu Temple in Chengdu, Sichuan, revealed one of these bone fragments to a journalist, the first time such a relic has been shown publicly.

Wenshusi is a renowned Buddhist temple with a history extending back to the Sui Dynasty (581-618) Xinxiang Temple. Many precious relics and Buddhist scriptures and records are held in the temple, including "tongue-blood" scriptures, a thousand-Buddha cassock woven by a concubine of a Ming Dynasty emperor, and a portrait of Mother Buddha embroidered by the daughter of a high official of the Qing Dynasty using her own hair.

However few people knew that the temple housed a bone relic of Master Xuanzang. "The bone relic is a sacred object, and as such, it cannot be casually shown to people," said Master Zongxing, the abbot.

According to *Tianfu Morning Post*, the journalist was asked to wait in the abbot's room. Four monks then brought the relic in. The sacred bone is kept in a miniature gilded pagoda with a round glass cover. At the base is a small glazed hole, through which the sacred relic can be clearly seen. Seen through the hole, the bone relic is dark yellow, smaller than the upper part of a thumb. Shaped like an arch, it is fixed to the red silk pad by a thread.

A minute later, the bone relic was returned to the shrine in which it is housed. Master Zongxing says short as the show was, it was an epoch-making event, being the first time that the bone relic was displayed to an outsider. "In principle, the bone relic would not be available to tourists. At best we would consider showing it regularly under the strict supervision of the temple monks. Even then, tourists would not be allowed to get as close as the journalist did," said the abbot.

Master Xuanzang was born in 600 AD. At the age of 13, he became a monk at the Jingshi Temple in Luoyang, Henan Province. From the age of 16 to 21,



Photo by Guo Tielu

Gaobeidian Antique Furniture Market Opens

By Peng Juan

Antique furniture fans have yet another shopping option with the opening of the Gaobeidian Folk Culture Garden of Classical Furniture on Tuesday.

Directly east of Jianguomen and the China World Trade Center, midway between the

fourth and fifth ring roads, the market covers an area of almost 6 hectares.

Within the blue brick courtyard-style business area, shoppers can find both genuine and reproduction Ming and Qing furniture, curios and other antiques, such as Ming-style chairs with simple but exqui-

site lines, black lacquer wardrobes with gold-plating traces from Shanxi, woodcarving for window decoration and fancy cashboxes.

Gaobeidian village has long been a center for collecting, restoring and trading antique furniture from every corner of the country.

he lived in Chengdu and then went to Chang'an, today's Xi'an, in Shanxi Province. At the age of 28, he set out for India to study Buddhism and returned to Chang'an 16 years later. Xuanzang spent his later years translating the Buddhist scriptures he brought to China from India. Many monks from Chengdu helped him in this work.

On hearing the news of Xuanzang's death in 664, the emperor suspended holding court for three days and honored him by allowing him to be buried at Yuhua Palace in Tongchuan, Shanxi Province, a place that can be seen from the imperial palace. Three years later, concerned that seeing Xuanzang's tomb every day would make the emperor depressed, his ministers asked him to move the tomb. Xuanzang was thus finally buried at Xingjiao Temple, in Shanxi Province.

In 880, Xingjiao Temple was destroyed during the Huangchao Uprising and Xuanzang's remains were left exposed to the open air. A monk who happened upon the desecrated tomb collected the bones and took them with him back to Zige Temple at Zhongnan Mountain, where he built a pagoda in which to enshrine them and

carved a stone tablet relating what had happened.

In 988, Master Kezheng, the abbot of Tianxi Temple in Nanjing came to Zhongnan Mountain to worship and came across some bone relics of Xuanzang at Zige Temple, which had been badly damaged during a recent war. After reading the tablet inscription, the abbot realized they were the sacred bones of Master Xuanzang.

He then carried the bone relics all the way from Shanxi back to Nanjing and built another pagoda in which to enshrine the bones. In 1408, Tianxi Temple was destroyed in a fire. The current Ming emperor then ordered the construction of Dabao'en Temple on the ruins to house the bone relics, which was subsequently destroyed during the Taiping rebellion at the end of the Qing Dynasty. However, the shrine had an underground section in which some of the bone relics were preserved intact.

In early November 1942 during the Republic of China, Japanese forces excavated a stone case at the ruins of Dabao'en Temple containing a section of bone relic. They broke the bone into several pieces and took them to Japan. Following negotiations

between the two governments in the 1940s, Japan returned six pieces to China, but secretly retained one.

The six pieces of bone were then enshrined in five cities: Guangzhou, Tianjin, Beijing and Chengdu received one each and Nanjing two. The piece enshrined in Tianjin was sent to India as a gift by the government in 1955. The piece that remained in Japan was later divided into three, one of which was sent to Taiwan.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the bone relics in Beijing and Guangzhou were both lost. To protect the relic at Wenshu Temple, Chengdu, the former abbot, Master Kuanlin, tied it around his waist and thus kept the treasure safe during that period.

In 1999, Nanjing divided one of its bone relics and gave one piece to the newly built Taiwan Xuanzang College. In 2000, Nanjing gave one piece to Xi'an. According to Master Zongxing, there are now altogether nine pieces of bone fragments of Master Xuanzang in existence: Chengdu and Xi'an each have one; Nanjing has two; Taiwan has two; India has one and Japan has two.

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By Yu Shanshan

Artists, bohemians and culture buffs have spoken and the city has listened – the much-lauded Dashanzi Art District will be spared the wrecking ball.

Now is the perfect time to celebrate, thanks to the opening of the first Dashanzi International Art Festival (DIAF 2004). This multi-faceted event, given the theme of “Radiance and Resonance/ Signals of Time,” kicked off with a packed and widely-publicized ceremony on April 13 and runs through May 23.

“We chose to hold the event now because spring has come and people want to spend more time outdoors,” explained Huang Rui, owner of the Beijing Tokyo Art Project and an organizer of the festival.

With the many exhibitions, performances, lectures, workshops and screenings scattered among the district’s venues, the festival has made the Dashanzi Art District a top May Day holiday destination, a stimulating place to take in plenty of fresh art, air and attitude.

“We want to show that art can transcend traditional gallery boundaries of being purely visual. Like Factory 798 itself, one needs to use more than just one sense to fully appreciate it,” said Berenice Angremy, a chief organizer of the festival, at the press conference in the Now Club.

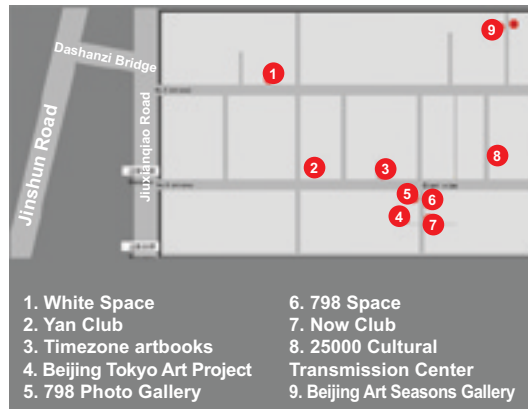
Not surprisingly, the old 798 Factory is the forum for many of the main exhibitions in the festival. The 798 Photo Gallery, the first place most visitors see, is hosting the first solo exhibition of photographer Liu Zheng. Entitled “Revolution Photography Exhibition,” the show is comprised of 12 of Liu’s latest large-format photos depicting major figures and events from China’s tumultuous history in the twentieth century.

Across the corridor in the 798 Space Gallery is a hands-on show of artist-created musical instruments called the “Transborder Language 2004-Volume Control Sound Art and Performance Exhibition,” which runs through May 2. The most delicate of the works are those by Japanese artist Yukio Fujimoto, who attaches chimes and other sounding parts of music boxes to different surfaces, such as a millstone, a line of wooden blocks or big porcelain plates. Not only are these pieces visually interesting, the mechanics of the music gears still work, and visitors are welcome to wind them up and enjoy the melodic results.

Film fans should check out

Party in the Name of Art

A guide to the Dashanzi International Art Festival



1. White Space
2. Yan Club
3. Timezone artbooks
4. Beijing Tokyo Art Project
5. 798 Photo Gallery
6. 798 Space
7. Now Club
8. 25000 Cultural Transmission Center
9. Beijing Art Seasons Gallery



- ① In the performance art piece Casting, He Yunchang's assistant busted him out of a concrete box at the Beijing Tokyo Art Project at the festival's opening.
- ② The “China Photographic Painting Exhibition” at the China Art Seasons gallery
- ③ Map of Dashanzi Art District
- ④ Eight by Eight, a series of unusual music boxes by Yukio Fujimoto

the Now Club’s line-up of 21 documentaries from Japan’s 2003 Yamagata Cultural Festival with screenings going on until May 7.

From May 7 to 9, the Beijing Tokyo Art Project at the right end of the old factory’s main corridor will host the “Action Theatre and Performance” event, directed by famed Chinese documentary filmmakers Wu Wenguang and Wen Hui. The show will be split into two parts. The first is the staging of the experimental dance drama *Uncertainties*,

performed by actors from China’s Living Dance Studio and British Artists Links studio on May 7 and 8 at 8 pm. A free open rehearsal of the dance show will be open on May 5. The second installment is a workshop on May 9 that will draw dancers from the Netherlands, the UK and China into a discussion on the present and future role of “living art.”

The 25000 Transmission Cultural Center, just a short walk northeast from the factory, is doing its part in the festival with the show “Gateway of Infinite

Wonders,” an examination of 10 years of works by artist Wang Mai including paintings, installations, photography and video.

Still further north, the China Art Seasons gallery, is shining light on some young Chinese painters’ explorations with photographic visual effects. The “China’s Photographic Painting Exhibition” runs throughout the festival and featured over 20 artists from around the country. From May 3 to 11, three artists from three countries, Zhu Ming of China, Fukuda Masahiro of Japan and Guillaume Paris of France, will display their own understandings of light through their respective mediums of body art, sculpture and multimedia.

To stir things up, the Yan Club will be hosting regular music and dance events from mid-May to the end of the festival. The club will also put on the Yan Art Painting Exhibition, from May 1 to 26, a show of oil paintings by artists Feng Feng, Zhang Jin and Yan Bo, whose works address the themes of the Orient, modernism and nature.

Artistic results from cross-cultural experiences are the themes of the show “Mensa,” the German word for student cafeterias, a collective exhibition at White Space from a group of Chinese and German artists who studied together in Germany.

The area’s many nooks, crannies and more intimate spaces hold sonic surprises thanks to artists and DJs. Ten normal public restrooms within the factory district have been rigged with speakers and music equipment oozing the same peaceful tunes, while local street artists and folk singers have been invited to stand along the roads and perform every weekend afternoon.

Along with bringing people to the factory and its surrounding galleries, bars and shops, another goal of the festival’s organizers is drawing attention to the area’s artist studios, some of which are hosting small shows of their own. For example, artist Qing Qing is displaying some of her never-before-shown installations made since 1999 in an exhibition entitled “Nature-Substance Substance-Nature-things in Boxes.”

Addressing the large crowd at Saturday’s festival opening, Yang Jiankun, a member of the DIAF 2004 organizing office, noted, “All of the shows here represent Dashanzi artists’ personal understandings of contemporary life and social changes. If visitors find it hard to catch their exact meaning, they should just take it easy and at least have fun.”

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Cooks' Crazy Entertainment

By Yu Shanshan

Three crazy chefs and a mischievous assistant try to keep preparations for a wedding banquet on schedule in the face of recurring bouts of conflict and percussive pandemonium.

The Korean yet cosmopolitan, almost-wordless comedy Nanta, or Cookin', is to be staged at Tianqiao Theater from May 5 to 8. Since its premiere in Seoul 1997, the show has astounded audiences around the world with its mix of rhythm, dance and acrobatic energy.

The comic percussive cookery exercise starts with a serene scene involving the playing of the four in-

struments (two drums and two gongs) of *samullori*, a popular genre of Korean folk music. Before long, however, saucepans and stockpots, whisks and woks, brooms and sticks and knives take the place of the traditional instruments.

Four performers throw themselves into their routines with precise timing and breakneck energy – more than 75 minutes of fast-paced and complex rhythms, till the throbbing drum finale.

Be warned, this show involves audience participation!

Where: Tianqiao Theatre, No. 30 Beiwei Lu, Xuanwu **When:** May 5-8 **Tickets:** 8315 6171

Pop Star Classical Pianist

By Yu Shanshan

The very latest hot new thing on the classical cross-over circuit is on his way to Beijing. Maksim Mrvica (pronounced 'Maravitsa' with a rolled 'r') is the latest protégé of Mel Bush, the manager of Vanessa Mae and Bond.

The 28-year-old Croatian pianist give his first public performance at the age of nine, the same year he began piano lessons and performed Haydn's C major piano concerto with an orchestra just three years later.

"I want to reach as many people of all ages as possible with classical music," Mrvica has been quoted as saying, so do not be surprised to find Rimski-Korsakov's *The Flight of the Bumblebee* augmented with techno beats and effects, not to mention dry ice and lasers.

The Mother's Day concert will be the final date of Mrvica's current Asia tour. The program will include *The Flight of the Bum-*



ble-bee, as well as classical pieces like Chopin's *Revolutionary Etude in C minor*, Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2*, and Handel's *Sarabande*.

Where: Beizhan Theatre, Xizhimenwai Avenue, Xicheng **When:** May 9 and 10 **Tickets:** 8315 6358

What's on DVD

By Tom Spearman

The West Wing, Series Three

At last! Season three of the Emmy Award-winning US presidential drama series is finally available in Beijing. Wish fulfillment it may be – after all, politicians are never this cool, especially now – but the West Wing still rules. And it comes in a classy widescreen ratio, unlike the full screen releases of seasons one and two.

Pink Panther Film Collection

This box set contains everything you could want except possibly the best film in the series, Return of the Pink Panther. Well, that's an exaggeration. A Shot in the Dark is the best, or maybe the original. The documentaries on the bonus disc are well worth a look, particularly The Pink Panther Story, which has interviews with the filmmakers.

Kill Bill

Part one of Quentin Tarantino's revenge epic is now available on DVD 9. It is worth it for the pristine transfer and excellent sound, a huge improvement on the dodgy copies previously available in Beijing's DVD stores. Sadly the bonus materials are pretty slim,

Consisting mainly of a 20-minute "making-of" featurette. There is also a fairly lame teaser for Kill Bill Part II.



WORLDWIDE



Steven Spielberg

Spielberg Takes on Olympic Task

Hollywood heavyweight Steven Spielberg's next film will focus on the tragedy of the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany. The *Minority Report* director is hoping to cast Sir Ben Kingsley in the movie, which tells the story of how 11 Israeli athletes were kidnapped and murdered by Palestinian activists during the sporting event. Filming on the project – which has been penned by Oscar-winning screenwriter Eric Roth – is due to begin in June and Spielberg has already started scouting for suitable locations in Europe.

(IMDB)



Madonna

Madonna's Warner Dispute Worsens

Madonna's dispute with Warner Music over her Maverick imprint has become increasingly acrimonious – with Warner accusing the label of losing \$66 million in the last five years. The pop queen is suing Warner for \$200 million, claiming their mismanagement is responsible for Maverick's loss making. However, it has emerged Warner preempted Madonna's March suit by launching a "sealed" lawsuit, claiming the singer must pay \$92.5 million to terminate their association – or face Maverick being turned into a "purely passive economic interest."

(IMDB)

Mr. Bean Actor Settles With Newspapers

Actor and comedian Rowan Atkinson accepted undisclosed damages and a public apology Thursday from newspapers that had alleged he was suffering from depression and on the edge of a nervous breakdown. The 49-year-old star of *Blackadder* and *Mr. Bean* attended London's High Court for the settlement of his libel action against Associated Newspapers over articles in the *Mail* on Sunday and the *Daily Mail* in December 2003 and January 2004.

(AP)



Clint Eastwood

Clint Eastwood Honored for Film Music

Filmmaker Clint Eastwood was honored for his latter endeavors during performing rights group ASCAP's annual awards ceremony for film and TV composers on last Wednesday. Eastwood was presented with the Opus Award for his "singular contribution of music to film," only the fourth time the prize has been handed out. In accepting, Eastwood described himself as "just a part-time guy," and jokingly wondered what might have become had he listened to his mother and paid more attention to his childhood piano lessons.

(Reuters)

Variety to Launch Chinese Edition

US-based entertainment magazine *Variety* plans to kick off its Chinese edition this June, the first of as many as a dozen titles its publisher hopes to launch in China this year. *Variety*'s owner, publisher Reed Business Information, has ambitious plans for the Chinese market and expects to eventually reap revenues of US \$100 million or more a year, company executives told Dow Jones Newswires. The magazine will be bi-weekly, but plans are for weekly publication by next year, he said.

(AP)



Billboard Singles Top 5

Position	Title	Artist	Album
1	Yeah!	Usher Featuring Lil Jon & Ludacris	Confessions
2	I don't wanna know	Mario Winans Featuring Enya & P. Diddy	Hurt No More
3	Burn	Usher	Confessions
4	Tipsy	J-Know	Hood Hop
5	Naughty Girl	Beyonce	Dangerously In Love



Official UK Singles Chart Top 5

Position	Title	Artist	Album
1	F**k It (I Don't Want You Back)	Eamon	I Don't Want You Back (CD-Single)
2	My Band	D12 Featuring Eminem	Songs about Jane (CD-Single)
3	This Love	Maroon 5	First Day of My Life
4	Left Outside Alone	Anastacia	
5	In the Shadows	The Rasmus	

Usher maintains his stranglehold on the Billboard Hot 100. His single *Yeah!* Has held onto the top spot for the 10th-straight week, becoming the first to post a double-digit run since Eminem's *Lose Yourself*, which held the spot for 12 weeks from November 2002 to January 2003.

Moving up to No. 5, Beyonce's *Naughty Girl*, becomes the fourth top 5 single from her Columbia debut, *Dangerously in Love*. Meanwhile in the UK, US rapper Eamon saw his debut album *I Don't Want You Back* take a huge leap last Sunday jumped from 34 to 6 on the album chart, while hanging on

to the No. 1 single spot with *F**k It (I Don't Want You Back)*. Another US act, Maroon 5 had the highest new entry on the singles chart, where five of the top six titles were by American acts. The band's *This Love* came in at No. 3.

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Top Tableware

By Lü Pinrou

There's no shortage of china in China, but truly high quality merchandise can prove a bit elusive. One way to insure some level of quality is to start with import-class products, and that's where the Yongxianglong shop comes in.

As the store's big sign reading "Tableware for Export" reveals, it only stocks porcelain pieces from export orders, meaning pieces are of high quality and safely lead- and cadmium-free. Many are also microwave and dishwasher safe, and all are priced are far lower than they would be after export.

The store is stuffed with hundreds of different kinds of pieces from tiny sauces and salt shakers to coffee cups, soup bowls and entire dining sets. All of them are quality china, not ceramic, because the former is far more durable, according to store staff.

Among the less conventional items are plates in the shapes of squares, triangles or leaves in colors from classic white to deep purple and burnt orange. Yet despite their elegant designs and quality, good, 25-centimeter wide square plates are just 35 yuan each and smaller pieces are cheaper.

People looking for a little more local flavor in their dining can choose tableware bearing Chinese paintings, such as a plate decorated with a picture of a little white rabbit in a moon palace, priced at 35 yuan.

Some of the pieces are actually better suited to being displayed on a wall or in a hutch display than put on the dining table. Among such artistic items is a beautiful plate with a painting of swaying bamboo leaves that fetches 55 yuan.

Besides its extensive selection, the store has solid service and provides simple polishing of all pieces sold.

Where: No.0 Maizidian Xilu, across the street from Laitai Flower Market (Laitai Huajie), Chaoyang

Open: 10:30 am - 6:30 pm
Tel: 8448 3880



Leaf-shaped plates come in a range of sizes, colors and prices.

Photos by Li Shuzhuan



Rabbit plate, 35 yuan

Online Shopping

Virtual Teapot Warehouse

By Wang Fang

Zisha, or purple clay, is a general term for a special kind of clay native to the Yixing region of Jiangsu Province used to make pottery pieces that fall somewhere between earthenware and porcelain. Similar looking and feeling clays can be found in other parts of China and also Europe, but no other matches Yixing zisha's quality and resulting exquisite creations.

Teapots made from zisha are considered superior vessels for making tea, mostly due to the clay's unglazed, porous surface that is able to absorb tea's flavor and aroma. With extended use, a fine zisha teapot will gradually develop a patina on its inside that can enhance the taste, color and fragrance of tea.

At the same time, zisha pots are beautiful, treasured for their artistic forms and superb workmanship. Finding these prized pots can be a bit of challenge, but is now easy for anyone with a computer thanks to the online store www.33066.com, which offers a wide range of authentic Yixing zisha tea-

pots made by acknowledged masters.

The well-thought-out site has everything a prospective pot buyer could need, from listings of regional stores to background information to teapot recommendations to a discussion forum.

The "recommended teapots" column contains four pages of special pots along with pictures and plenty of information on their materials, makers and any honors garnered. To learn more about a pot, simply click on a pic or its name to bring up text on where the vessel is sold, its size and its availability. Phone numbers and descriptions are provided for listed stores so that interested customers can directly call store owners to make sure they get the pots they want.

Many of the pieces on display and sale on the site were made by master crafts people, such as Bao Yumei. Some of her teapots have been collected by domestic galleries and other art institutions, and her work *Jin Ou*, or "gold ware," has won a prize from Tsinghua University's Industrial Arts Institution.



Multi-culti Settings

By Lisa Lee

Stepping into the Purple Collection store inside COFCO plaza is like entering an exotic land that mixes five different countries in one fine site for relaxing and shopping.

The shop sports a wide variety of art and crafts pieces from Europe and Southeast Asia, so there is sure to be something to match any kind of interior decorating scheme. The majority of the goods are of top quality and made by prominent international makers, hailing from France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, India and Thailand.

The Thai items, including vases, bowls, candlesticks and tableware tend to be natural, unadorned and light-looking, fit for homes with simple, nature-inspired decorating schemes. They are made of mango wood, some spruced up with flowers or images of plants and animals with inlaid tin, other carved into or-

Chopsticks-o-Rama

By Lü Pinrou

It's wall to wall chopsticks in the Yunhong Chopsticks Shop on Wangfujing Avenue, making it seem more like a small museum for the ancient Asian eating utensils than a retail business.

Thanks to its unusual stock and good location, the store is crowded nearly day every day, attracting all kinds of people strolling the Wangfujing pedestrian shopping area. On any given day, visitors to the Yunhong Chopsticks Shop are likely to hear Cantonese and other regional Chinese accents along with some Japanese, English, French and other languages.

The secret of Yunhong's success is that the chopsticks it sells are truly special. There are more than 600 kinds of chopsticks available, and no two are too alike. They range from the classically simple to elaborate utensils suitable for serving at fancy gatherings.

According to store staff, a few sets have proven most popular with foreigners. One is painted with tiny scenes from the famed Chinese scroll painting the *Qingming Shanghetu*, or *Scroll of Pure Brightness on the River*, priced at 24 yuan per pair. Another set bearing characters as written on ancient oracle bones has a similar feel of historical heft and a lighter price of 20 yuan.

Other big sellers among the *laowai* are sticks with pictures of mini Beijing Opera masks (24 yuan per pair) and ones called "beggars' chopsticks" crafted into



One of the Yunhong Chopstick's stores hundreds of stick sets.

fun shapes from mulberry wood and priced at 35 yuan per pair.

They may not look it, but among the store's most useful items are pairs of super-sized chopsticks that extend more than 40 centimeters long. These lengthy tools are perfect for keeping hands a safe distance from heat when cooking, making them great for stir-frying, baking or grilling. Plus, they only cost 3 yuan to 8 yuan per pair depending on material.

For customers that appreciate consistency, the store also stocks a wide range of place settings, consisting of chopsticks, placemats and napkins, reasonably priced at 20 yuan to 220 yuan per set.

Where: No. 277 Wangfujing Avenue, near the entrance to Wangfujing Xiaochi Jie (snack food alley)

Open: 9 am - 11 pm
Tel: 8511 1731



Photo by Lisa Lee

from 200 yuan to 1,000 yuan.

The selection of items from Italy is made up of crystal jewelry from Murano, priced at a reasonable 258 yuan to 1,488 yuan, and wrought iron, rose-shaped lamps imported from Florence and priced much higher at 6,000 yuan to 19,600 yuan.

Iron candlesticks from Belgium (3,800 yuan for small ones and 7,880 yuan for large) are sure to light up a room with the romantic warmth of many candles. Try the Belgian flame-shaped candles priced at 50 yuan to 100 yuan each, or choose other items from the small country such as graceful glass vases that fetch 400 yuan to 800 yuan.

From Holland there is a wide variety of durable, attractive tableware made of stainless steel. Cast in gleaming geometrical forms, the plates and other pieces are suitable for service at five-star hotels or in posh homes. Prices start at 600 yuan and go up to 2,000 yuan.

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Eating in Honor of Mexico's May Day

By Caitlin Thompson

The ancient culture of Mexico has delivered some of the finest culinary contributions known to the human race. From the humble avocado they created guacamole, the only true companion to the tortilla chip, from cocoa beans they divined chocolate and from the blue agave cactus, that sweet nectar of the immortals and rowdy bar patrons, tequila. And they did not stop there.

Before the Europeans showed up on the scene, Mexican cuisine was predominately grain-based and, suffice to say, lacking. With the arrival of Cortez and his posse of conquistadores in 1521 came death and mayhem for the great king Montezuma and the indigenous people of central Mexico.

But they managed to combine some powerful tools of culinary technology with the already present corn, vanilla, peanuts, chocolate and beans. Adding elements such as pork, beef, lamb, citrus fruits, garlic, cheese, milk, wheat, vinegar and wine, food was brought to a whole new level. So, despite killing off a civilization and discontinuing the gruesome, if entertaining native practice of human sacrifice, the Spaniards kicked down the doors to the halls of good eating.

Mexican food in its present incarnation is distinct for its fresh cilantro, piquant *jalapeno* peppers, rich beans soaked in fat and refried, and cavalier use of cornmeal, be it fried or steamed, in wrappings and chips. Pile onto this mishmash some melted cheese and sour cream, and you can arrive at religious awakening.

Typical Mexican dishes familiar to even the most un-indoctrinated followers are *burritos*, *tacos* and *fajitas* – usually grilled chicken or beef wrapped inside flour or corn *tortillas*, thin pancakes onto which you can dump *salsa*, cheese, lettuce and *guacamole*, a topping consisting of mashed avocados, tomatoes, onions, cilantro and a dash of lime juice.

One of the most gloriously celebrated Mexican holidays occurs on the fifth of May, Cinco de Mayo. On this day in 1862, 4,000 Mexican soldiers defeated their last colonizers, the French. At Puebla, Mexico, 100 miles east of the capital established by Hapsburg Prince Maximilian, the ragtag bunch beat an army of 8,000 and established their independence. The holiday is now mostly celebrated outside of Mexico, reveling in the fine tradition that is Mexican food.



Fresh mixed fajitas at Mexican Wave fall short on flavor

Photos by Li Shuzhuan

Quick Trip 'South of the Border'

By Ian Provan

There is a saying in Spain (or at least in some Spanish restaurants) that Spanish cuisine boasts one thousand different dishes, while Mexican cuisine boasts one dish cooked one hundred different ways. Of course that claim is absolutely unfair and untrue ... but you can see what they are getting at.



Perhaps the owners of Cabo Cafe are mindful of this typecasting. It is not so much a Mexican restaurant as a restaurant with a menu that offers as wide a selection of Mexican dishes as anyone could reasonably hope for, and then more or less covers the rest of the world. However, on this

occasion, my assignment was to check out the Mexican cuisine, so I ignored the 15 or so pages of "international" listings that made up the rest of the menu.

Now at this point I have to make a confession. The sensible way to review a restaurant is to go for a leisurely meal with three or four other people. That way, you get to sample a decent selection of dishes, and have a bit of a discussion about what is good, what is not and what needs to be done to smarten things up. The not so sensible way is to blow in and out again for a leave-the-meter-running, solitary lunch. Which is what I did.

The nachos starter, with refried beans, guacamole and cheese was great. Everything that nachos should be, spicy and ... hmmm ... what can you say about nachos! They either work or they don't. These worked.

The chicken *mole* (that's the famous chicken with spicy chocolate sauce) was not quite so successful. The chocolate sauce was sweet, which is fine for chocolate sauce with ice cream, not so good with chicken.

That was followed by one of the best cappuccinos I've had in Beijing and I was out the door.

As well as (or apart from) the never ending menu, Cabo scores top points for friendly and efficient service, a well put together wine list that offers several reasonably priced not so common choices, and a dangerously extensive looking selection of tequilas.

Where: 24 Jianguomenwai Dajie, in the Overseas Chinese Village **Open:** 9 am - 2 am **Tel:** 6515 6826 **Cost:** 100 yuan



Fajitas with Chinese characteristics at Cabo Cafe

Mex Mess

By Caitlin Thompson

To ship your taste buds to a Latin locale for the holiday, you could take a visit to Jianguomen's Mexican Wave. That is if you're no stranger to disappointment.



One of Beijing's first attempts at world cuisine, the Wave has had more than 10 years to get it right – something reflected in the all-inclusive menu. The usual gang's all here, from tacos, fajitas, nachos and burritos to *chimichangas* (deep-fried pillows of beans and meat), and available in every permutation imaginable. Lamentably, they all fall quite short of even a skeptic's expectations.

A Mexican food neophyte's favorite, the taco, is typically housed in a shell of resilient fried corn tortilla. The Wave's taco shells must have been stored in a root cellar because they were about as pliant as a gymnast. Further digging produced leather doused with meat flavoring and some off-putting browning lettuce. Trying to mask the travesty, I buried my *carne asada*, or grilled beef, under a healthy

dollop of guacamole. Had the topping lived up to its tongue-inspiring potential, I could have gnawed through the horsemeat that lay within. But the Wave's wimpy guacamole refused to work with me, so I had to resort to a friend's fajita platter for some nourishment.

His chicken fajitas were dished up with some pomp and circumstance; mini bowls of various accoutrements lined the sizzling platter of chicken, onions and green peppers. Biting into a bland package of vegetables and meat, I recognized an emerging pattern. In their zest for decorating the Wave with ponchos and guitars, the proprietors forgot a crucial part of the Mexican food experience – flavor. The colors were right, bright greens, reds and yellows, but is cardboard by any other color still as flavorful? Clearly, no.

The *chimichangas*, both in vegetarian and minced beef options, gave at least a game appearance of golden fried dough served atop willing lettuce leaves. But one bite in, and we were back where we started – another dish that flavor forgot.

The one pillar of strength upon which the Wave can rely is their endless array of margaritas. To their credit, the crew has nailed down the elusive combination of tequila, Triple Sec, and lime juice to create a shining gem of a cocktail. To take their minds off the food, customers can indulge in one of 17 neon-colored varieties including passion fruit, banana, and for adventurous imbibers, caramel. The drinks are strong and relatively cheap, 35 yuan for regulars and 45 yuan for flavored. If you're dying to break out of the Tsingtao beer/whiskey Coke cycle, the Wave is a festive place to throw back a few drinks. Just don't expect much to pad the stomach.

Where: Dongdaqiao Lu, 200 meters north of Guiyou Dasha, Chaoyang **Open:** 10 am - 2 am **Tel:** 6506 3961 **Average cost:** 100 yuan

Recipe: Red Rice

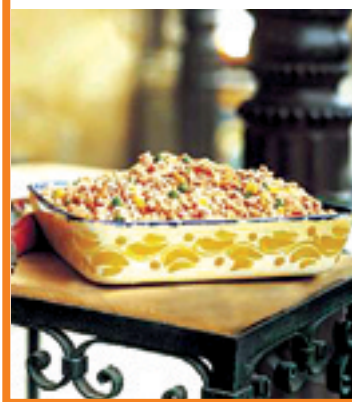
Mexican food certainly qualifies as exotic in this country, but because it uses many ingredients easily available in China, making it at home is not as difficult as one might guess. Try this delicious dish of rice cooked with tomatoes and vegetables, known as *arroz rojo* in its native land.

- 5 ripe tomatoes, peeled and diced, or 1 large can peeled whole tomatoes in juice, drained and chopped
- 3 tablespoon diced white onion
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 cup white rice
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 carrot, peeled and cut into small cubes
- 1/3 cup shelled fresh peas
- 1/3 cup fresh, canned or frozen corn kernels
- 3 green chilies, minced
- 6 sprigs cilantro, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt

Add to oil to a large sautee pan or medium soup pan and heat. Throw in onion and garlic and cook until onion is soft and translucent, about five minutes, then add the rice and cook until rice is pale golden, about one minute. Then add the tomatoes, hot water, carrot, peas, corn, cilantro, chilies and salt.

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and cover. Cook until almost all liquid absorbed, about 12 minutes. Remove cover and cook until remaining liquid has been absorbed and rice is tender, about 10 minutes.

Remove from heat, cover and let sit for five minutes. Fluff rice with a fork before serving. Makes five mid-sized servings.



Dining Out for Labor, Moms' Days

Labor Day Promotion, Novotel Xinqiao Beijing

Where: Coffee Shop, Novotel Xinqiao Beijing, 2 Dongjiaominxiang, Dongcheng
Tel: 6513 3366 ext. 2001

Cost: 118 yuan for lunch, 138 yuan for dinner

Mother's Day Special, China World Hotel

Where: Scene a Café, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomenwai Dajie, Chaoyang
Tel: 6505 2266 ext.35

Cost: 338 yuan plus 15 plus service charge.

Mom's Day Buffet, Grand Hyatt Beijing

Where: Grand Café, Grand Hyatt Beijing, 1 Dong Chang'an Avenue

Open: 11:30 am - 2:30 pm; 5:30-10 pm

Tel: 8518 1234 ext. 3628

Cost: 258 yuan plus 15 percent service charge

Remember Mom at Kerry Center Hotel

Where: Coffee Garden, Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang
Open: 11:30 am - 2:30 pm, 5:30-10:30 pm

Tel: 6561 8833 ext. 41

Cost: 148 yuan; kids under six free

Inner Monglian Spectacular at Wan Li Chinese Restaurant

Where: Renaissance Beijing Hotel, 36 Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang

Open: 11:30 am - 2:30 pm; 5-10 pm (closed May 1-4)

Tel: 6468 9999 ext. 3131

Cost: 80 yuan

Activities

Hilton Kitchen Experience

A series of culinary specials continues in April, including "Wok with Lam". Learn about cooking traditional Chinese fried rice and dim sum with Chef Lam.

Where: Beijing Hilton Hotel No.1 Dongfang Road, Beilu Dongsanhuan **When:** April 28, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm **Cost:** 250 yuan **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext 1250



Guardian Online Auction

A large scale online auction at www.guaweb.com, offering Chinese calligraphy and paintings among other items.

Where: www.guaweb.com, **When:** April 26 - April 30, **Tel:** 6710 2935 ext. 104

Beijing Hikers

This walk heads up a valley, past a cave that used to be a refuge for bandits during the Tang Dynasty who preyed on the local villages for miles around. Following a sandy slope down to the village of Ai Wa, the trail then heads to Bai Long Tan village.

Where: Miyun County, north east of Beijing **When:** May 2, meet 8:30 outside the Lido Hotel Starbucks **Admission:** adults 150 yuan, Children 100 yuan **Tel:** 13910025516

Performance

Spirit of the Dance

Spirit of the Dance brings world class Irish folk dance to China. This troupe has built a great reputation and broken box office records in 15 countries. Vigorous Irish folk dancing combined with passionate Latin Tango and unrestrained Flamenco, this performance will certainly give the audience a memorable night. **Where:** Poly Theater, No. 14, Nandajie, Dongzhimen, Dongcheng **When:** May 1 - May 3 **Admission:** 380 - 1080 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext 5621 / 5619

Little Birch

Russian dancing group Little Birch will visit China during the May Day holiday, and perform their most famous dances. **Where:** Beijing Exhibition Theater, No. 135, Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng, **When:** May 1 - May 3 7:30 pm, **Admission:** 80 - 680 yuan, **Tel:** 6831 6677 ext. 4105 / 6835 4457

Peer Gynt

During the Beijing International Drama Season, The Ibsen Theatre will perform *Peer Gynt* to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Norway foreign relations. *Peer Gynt* is a magnum opus of the famous playwright Ibsen. In memory of the 100th anniversary of his death in 2006, the Norwegian embassy will hold a series of activities, including seminars and movies.

Where: Tian Qiao Theater, No. 30, Beiwei Road, (opposite Beijing Natural Museum), Xuanwu, **When:** April 30 - May 3, **Admission:** 180 - 880 yuan, **Tel:** 8315 6170



Service

Shangri-la Labour Day Special

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts are offering up to 40% off regular room rates and late check out until 6 pm for this Labour Day public holiday. Available at its 38 properties in Asia Pacific including its 17 hotels in mainland China. Reservations can be made via Shangri-La's toll free reservation number 10 800 852 5900, or via www.shangri-la.com.

Where: Shangri-La Hotel, No. 29, Zizhuyuan Road, **When:** April 30 - May 9, **Tel:** 6841 2211

Views from an Island



Irish Contemporary Art from the Collection of the Irish Museum of Modern Art. This major exhibition of contemporary art is the first of its kind to visit China from Ireland. It forms part of the cultural exchange program between Ireland and China taking place in 2004. Many of the works reflect the major social and economic changes that Ireland has been experiencing in recent years.

Where: Millennium Monument Museum, No.9 Fuxing Road, Haidian **When:** April 29- May 22 Monday - Thursday: 8:00am - 6:00 pm Friday - Sunday: 8:00 am - 9:00 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan for adults, 15 yuan for students **Tel:** 6857 3281

Exhibitions



China's Photographic Painting

Participating artists include Zhong Biao, Shi Xinning, Yin Zhaoyang, and 20 other famous young artists. The aim is to show how modern Chinese art has been influenced by photography and western concepts.

Where: China Art Seasons Gallery, No.2 Jiuxianqiao Road, Chaoyang **When:** April 24 - May 30 (closed Mondays), 11 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6431 1900

Pang Yongjie Oil Painting Exhibition

Pang Yongjie's oil painting features big areas of color blocks, with fluent strokes and a characteristic style. His paintings give an impression of brevity, purity, and elegance.



Where: Qin Gallery, Hua Wei Li Enjoy Paradise1-1E (North of Beijing Curio City) Chaoyang **When:** May 1 - 6, 9:30 am - 7:00 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461 / 0458

Eastern or Western Art?

Han Weihua and Huang A'xian's modern art exhibition shows some of the differences between Western and Eastern art, featuring mysterious Buddha figures.

Where: Fafa Gallery, No.2 Xiangjiang beilu, Chaoyang, (Opposite Riviera Garden) **When:** April 28 - May 8, 9 am - 10 pm, daily **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8430 2587

2004 Outstanding Young Talent Exhibition

Featuring works by 46 outstanding young artists born in the 1960s and 1970s, including Zhan Jisheng, Ma Xiaoteng and

Chen Kai. With a special vision and sensitivity, they add modern western style to Chinese art.

Where: Today Gallery, Third floor, No. 9 Jindian Garden, No. 9 Wenhuiyuan Beilu, Haidian **When:** April 22 - May 8, 9 am - 5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6223 8309



Sports

Golf Competition

Sponsored by Volkswagen, 144 professional golfers will take part in this tournament. The winner will receive prize money of \$300,000. Free regular bus to the golf course and free tickets available on <http://www.volkswagen-masters.cn/>.

Where: Pin Valley Golf Resort & Country Club, Changping **When:** April 28 - May 2, **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8518 6000

Jams

Nameless Highland Bar

Punk party with live bands, including Another Idea and Water Bug.

Where: Building 14, Anhuili Area 1, Yayuncun, Chaoyang District (200 metres north of the Yayuncun Hospital intersection). **When:** April 30, 9:00 pm, **Admission:** 30 yuan, **Tel:** 6489 1613

Get Lucky Bar

The Second Hand Roses will perform in Get Lucky Bar. The band plays humorous Northeastern folk style songs, and is one of the most famous rock bands in China



Personal Classifieds

Rentals

Brand-new furnished apartment in Blue Castle Int'l Apt. 7th floor, a spacious living room with nice view of garden, 3 bedrooms, elegant furniture. Club, library, parking. Located in the heart of the CBD, with shopping center, entertainment and subway access. US\$2000/month.

Tel: 13501162936

Language Exchange

A Beijing girl who would like to make a good friend with native English speakers for exchange in culture and language.

Email:

shirlyce4444@hotmail.com

A Chinese female reporter, pretty, well-educated, hard-working is looking for a language exchange partner in Beijing. He or she must be native English speaker. My spoken English is OK.

E-mail: v_lilian@sohu.com

A Chinese man, fond of music and traveling (up to now has been all over Europe and Asia), speaks German fluently and English. Welcome you to contact me for language and cultural exchange.

Email: lyberlin@sina.com

Situation Wanted

Paul, middle-aged and handsome gentleman, educated and very kind and romantic. Has been to 10 countries, speaks good English, Mandarin and French. Seeks friends and overseas employment.

Tel: 68053121 /

13520700984

A senior translator with 20 years' experience in a wide range of subjects would like to work for you full-time or part-time.

Tel: 68034254 /

13681573184

E-mail:

zwchen0891@sina.com

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TV and Radio Highlights

CCTV-9

Monday - Friday

Around China	6:30 am
Documentary	8:30 am

Nature and Science	
Chinese Civilization	11:30 am
Cultural Express	4:30 pm

Shanghai Today and	
Chinese Civilization	6 pm
Center Stage	10:30 pm

Sports Scene and Learning	
Chinese	11 pm
Dialogue	12:30 pm

Saturday

Travelogue	9:30 am
World Insight	11:30 am

Sunday

China This Week	9:30 am
Business Guide	11:00 am
China Today	11:30 am

China Radio International 91.5 FM

Monday - Friday

Easy FM Afternoon	2-7 pm
Fun in Beijing	5:05-5:30 pm

Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
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Saturday

Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Euro Hit 40	12:05-1 pm
Music Sans Frontiers	6:05-8 pm

Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
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Sunday

Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Jazz Beat	6:05-8 pm

Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
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We are glad to receive your feedback. We will print employment, language exchange and accommodation info for individuals. Feel free to email us at bjtodayinfo@ynet.com or call 6590 2521

By Lü Pinrou



Yuyuantan Lake

By Shida Zhu

Early springtime, when the Japanese cherry are in full bloom around Yuyuantan Lake, is the ideal time to take a boat from the lake dock along the Kunyu River (Kunming Lake-Yuyuantan Lake River) to Kunming Lake at the Summer Palace. This was the route feudal emperors and their retinue took when traveling from the Forbidden City to the Summer Palace.

Gaoliang River

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Changhe (长河) or Gaoliang River (高粱河), as it was then known, was the main water route used by the emperors to travel in their dragon-bedecked ships to the numerous imperial palaces and gardens in the city's western suburbs from Xizhimen (西直门). Because of the river's imperial significance, both banks were planted with willows, peaches and "tourist" trees. Seen from afar, the green willows are said to resemble two green dragons with dabs of peach red flying along the riverbanks.

Every year on the eighth day of the fourth month on the lunar calendar, Empress Dowager Cixi would leave the Forbidden City for the Summer Palace in her dragon boat, via the Changhe River, amidst an imperial fanfare.

At the eastern end of the Gaoliang River stood Gaoliang Bridge, at today's Xizhimenwai. During the Qing Dynasty, at the south end of the bridge was a tobacco shop, referred to by locals as the "imperial tobacco shop."

One story has it that the shop owner was formerly a guard charged with the security of the imperial route. When his leg was injured by a horse belonging to Emperor Qianlong, rendering him unable to continue working as a security guard, the emperor granted him the right to open a shop there. This was a privilege at the time, as businesses were forbidden along the route, for fear they could serve as a hiding place for assassins.

Another story runs like this: The mother of Emperor Qianlong lived in Changchun Garden (later the Summer Palace) all year round. Emperor Qianlong went there every three days to pay his respects to her. One day, when the imperial sedan chair passed Gaoliang Bridge, the emperor, a die-hard smoker, stuck his long-stemmed pipe out of the sedan curtain. The attendants, who had neglected to bring along a lighter were thrown into a state of panic, until a quick-witted peddler at the bridgehead held out a long stick of incense and lit the pipe.

Highly impressed by this show of resourcefulness, the emperor ordered that a tobacco shop be established there for him. The shop was not open to the general public. A stool covered with a red rug stood perennially in front of the shop. There were two lacquered tobacco containers on it, one for the emperor and one for his mother. The shop owner, who sported a cap with red tassels and wore a blue gown, waited here when the emperor was to pass under Gaoliang Bridge. The shop and its service to the emperors lasted until the reign of Emperor Guangshu through Jiaqing, Daoguang, Xianfeng and Tongzhi.

Garden of Happy Benevolence

Another landmark along the route was the Garden of Happy Benevolence (乐善园 Leshan Garden), today's Beijing Zoo, one kilometer west of Xizhimen Gate. The Changhe River divided the garden into two parts. Facing the rear gate, on the northern bank of the Changhe River, stood the Five-Pagoda Temple (Wutasi 五塔寺 or Dazhenjue Temple 大真觉寺) built during the Ming. It was

given a face-lift during the 21st year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong. Today, it is a museum of stone carvings.

An Indian Buddhist monk came to Beijing with five golden Buddha statues during the reign of Emperor Yongle. The emperor appointed him as the nation's Buddhist master, granted him a golden seal and planned to build a temple for him. The construction on the enormous Dazhenjue Temple was not started until 70 years later, during the ninth year of the reign of Emperor Xuanzong. Its form, patterns and size were all modeled on an Indian temple. The rocky foundation platform was almost 20 meters high.

On top of the platform stood five pagodas, each seven meters high. Each pagoda contained one of the five golden statues offered by the Indian monk. The temple was burned down by the British-French allied forces in 1860 and reduced virtually to ruins by the Western allied forces in 1900. It was re-built in 1937 and 1938.

Suzhou Street

The ancient Suzhou Street stretched from the Luhuada (芦花渡) now Purple-Bamboo Park (紫竹园) in the south, along the western wall of Wanshou Temple (万寿寺) and ended at the southern gate of the Summer Palace.

Emperor Qianlong built Suzhou Street (苏州街) to please his mother when she was celebrating her 70th birthday.

His mother was particular fond of the streets in Suzhou, which she had seen on inspection tours of southern China. The emperor ordered the building of such a street in Beijing that featured Suzhou-style shops and were staffed by shop attendants from Suzhou.

Most outstanding of all in the street was the Peacock Pagoda, a gift of wealthy southern Chinese salt merchants. The foundation of the pagoda was an octagonal white marble form topped by a wooden octagonal pagoda. The beams were all painted with color designs and inset with pearls, jade and jadeite. The roof was decorated with a flying peacock design and covered with imported peacock feathers.

On the eve of the Queen Mother's birthday, there was a light snow fall, and the peacock feather roof was covered with snow, glittering in the sunshine. The street was burned down in the war of 1860.

Purple-Bamboo Park

There was a stone bridge at Guangyuanzha (广源闸) on the Changhe River which the imperial ships could not pass under. Officials designed another waterway to pass around the stone bridge, hence the lake in today's Zizhuyuan (Purple-Bamboo Park 紫竹园).

During the reign of Emperor Qianlong, Xinghuacun, literally apricot flower village, a Suzhou-style restaurant, was built at the southern end of the Suzhou Street. The marshland that faced the restaurant was decorated with rocks from Taihu Lake and planted with reeds. In late autumn and early winter, the reeds turned purple-black, and from afar, looked like a sea of purple bamboo.



Gaoliang River

Photos by Tian Xiaotong



Lu Xun's Residence

By Zhang Ran

Running by the foot of the old city wall, Xi Santiao, at Fuchengmennei, was a relatively poor area. In 1923, the great modern Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) bought the courtyard at No. 21, and turned it into a comfortable dwelling, living there until he left Beijing in August 1926.

The courtyard is divided into two parts by the house, and features two clove trees in the front and peach and plum trees in the back, all planted by Lu Xun himself. Grey brick walls, red wooden doors and windows, together with the fragrant trees endow the building with a primitive simplicity and elegance.

There are two rooms in the south part. The larger is a reception room and library, and the smaller one inside is a guest room. The book shelf was designed by Lu Xun and a carpenter from his hometown, Shaoxing in Zhejiang province. On the east wall of the room hangs a portrait of Lu Xun by Tao Yuanqing, who also came from Shaoxing. The covers of Lu Xun's books *Fen* and *Panghuang* were also designed by Tao Yuanqing.

The northern section rooms are the daily living rooms. Lu Rui, Lu Xun's mother, lived in the east room. She came to Beijing in 1919 and moved to Xi Santiao with Lu Xun on May 25, 1924.

In the west room lived Lu's former wife, Zhu An. The furniture is quite simple: a bed, a table and a cabinet. Zhu An, born in 1878 in Shanyin, Zhejiang. She married Lu Xun in 1906, and came to Beijing in 1919. Lu Xun once said, "She is a gift from my mother. I have to provide for her, but there was no love between us." When Lu Xun left Beijing, she stayed with his mother and lived here alone after his mother died in 1943. Zhu An died in June, 1947.

The middle room was used as a dining room. There is a traditional Chinese painting on the east wall, showing a boy, Lu Xun's fourth brother, who died at a very early age.

There is a tiny room called The Tiger Tail attached to the dining room. This was Lu Xun's study and bedroom, the place where he wrote *Ye Cao Ji* and the essays in *Fen*, *Panghuang* and *Zhao Hua Xi Shi*.

Lu Xun only lived at Xi Santiao for a little over two years, however it was the most productive creative period of the 14 years he spent in Beijing.

After Zhu An died, Lu Xun's second wife, Xu Guangping, donated the building, his manuscripts and personal possession to the government.

In 1956, on the 20th anniversary of Lu Xun's death, the Lu Xun Museum in Xi Santiao was formally opened to public.

Where: 21 Xisan Tiao, Fuchengmennei

Open: 9 am - 5 pm

Admission: 5 yuan, 3 yuan for students



The Tiger Tail

Photos by Wang Wei